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THE OLD DEVIL AND THE THREE LITTLE DEVILS

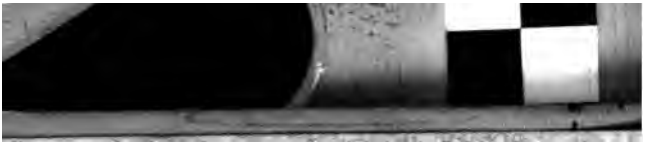
OR

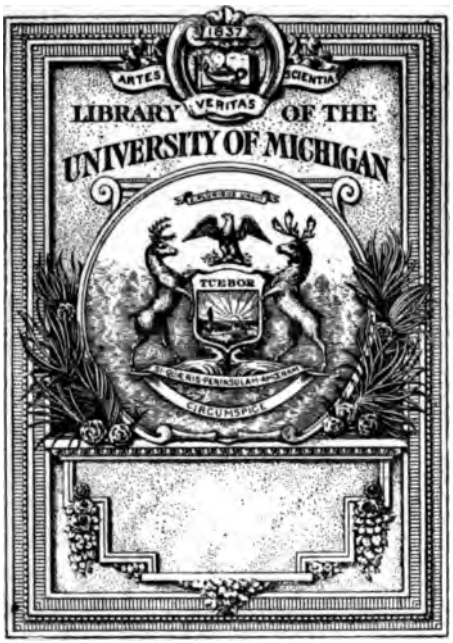
IVAN THE FOOL, ETC.,

BY

COUNT LEO TOLSTOI

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY COUNT NORRAIKOW

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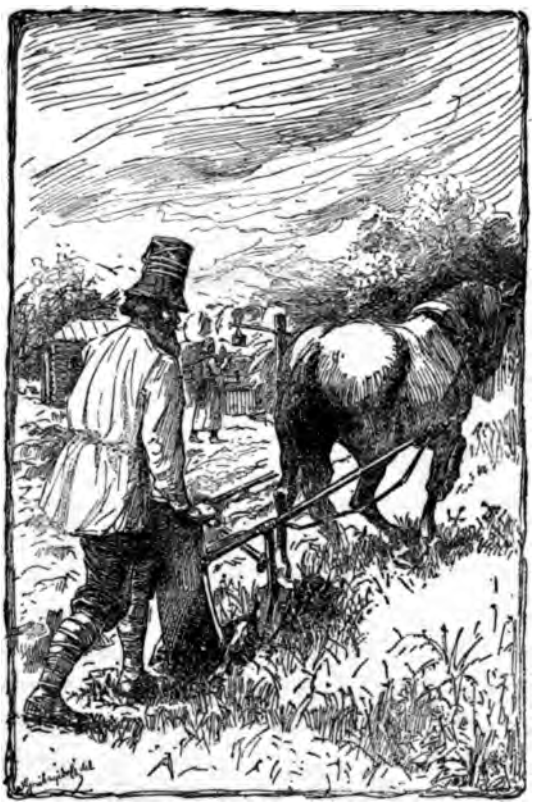
IVAN THE FOOL.



THE FOOL STRIKES HIS FIRST SNAG.

IVAN THE FOOL.

CHAPTER I.

In a certain kingdom there lived a rich peasant, who had three sons—Simeon (a soldier), Tarras-Briukhan (fat man), and Ivan (a fool)—and one daughter, Milania, born dumb. Simeon went to war, to serve the Czar; Tarras went to a city and became a merchant; and Ivan, with his sister, remained at home to work on the farm.

For his valiant service in the army, Simeon received an estate with high rank, and married a noble's daughter. Besides his large pay, he was in receipt of a handsome income from his estate; yet he was unable to make ends meet. What the husband saved, the wife wasted

in extravagance. One day Simeon went to the estate to collect his income, when the steward informed him that there was no income, saying:

"We have neither horses, cows, fishing-nets, nor implements; it is necessary first to buy everything, and then to look for income."

Simeon thereupon went to his father and said:

"You are rich, *batiushka* [little father], but you have given nothing to me. Give me one-third of what you possess as my share, and I will transfer it to my estate."

The old man replied: "You did not help to bring prosperity to our household. For what reason, then, should you now demand the third part of everything? It would be unjust to Ivan and his sister."

"Yes," said Simeon; "but he is a fool, and she was born dumb. What need have they of anything?"

"See what Ivan will say."

Ivan's reply was: "Well, let him take his share."

Simeon took the portion allotted to him, and went again to serve in the army.

Tarras also met with success. He became rich and married a merchant's daughter, but even this failed to satisfy his desires, and he also went to his father and said, "Give me my share."

The old man, however, refused to comply with his request, saying: "You had no hand in the accumulation of our property, and what our household contains is the result of Ivan's hard work. It would be unjust," he repeated, "to Ivan and his sister."

Tarras replied: "But he does not need it. He is a fool, and cannot marry, for no one will have him; and sister does not require anything, for she was born dumb." Turning then to Ivan he continued: "Give me half the grain you have, and I will not touch the implements or fishing-nets; and from the cattle I will take

only the dark mare, as she is not fit to plow."

Ivan laughed and said: "Well, I will go and arrange matters so that Tarras may have his share," whereupon Tarras took the brown mare with the grain to town, leaving Ivan with one old horse to work on as before and support his father, mother, and sister.

CHAPTER II.

It was disappointing to the *Stary Tchert* (Old Devil) that the brothers did not quarrel over the division of the property, and that they separated peacefully; and he cried out, calling his three small devils (*Tchertionki*).

"See here," said he, "there are living three brothers — Simeon the soldier, Tarras-Briukhan, and Ivan the Fool. It is necessary that they should quarrel. Now they live peacefully, and enjoy each other's hospitality. The Fool spoiled all my plans. Now you three go and work with them in such a manner that they will be ready to tear each other's eyes out. Can you do this?"

"We can," they replied.

"How will you accomplish it?"

"In this way: We will first ruin them to such an extent that they will have nothing to eat, and we will then gather them together in one place where we are sure that they will fight."

"Very well; I see you understand your business. Go, and do not return to me until you have created a feud between the three brothers —or I will skin you alive."

The three small devils went to a swamp to consult as to the best means of accomplishing their mission. They disputed for a long time—each one wanting the easiest part of the work—and not being able to agree, concluded to draw lots; by which it was decided that the one who was first finished had to come and help the others. This agreement being entered into, they appointed a time when they were again to meet in the swamp—to find out who was through and who needed assistance.

The time having arrived, the young devils met in the swamp as agreed, when each related

his experience. The first, who went to Simeon, said: "I have succeeded in my undertaking, and to-morrow Simeon returns to his father."

His comrades, eager for particulars, inquired how he had done it.

"Well," he began, "the first thing I did was to blow some courage into his veins, and, on the strength of it, Simeon went to the Czar and offered to conquer the whole world for him. The Emperor made him commander-in-chief of the forces, and sent him with an army to fight the Viceroy of India. Having started on their mission of conquest, they were unaware that I, following in their wake, had wet all their powder. I also went to the Indian ruler and showed him how I could create numberless soldiers from straw. Simeon's army, seeing that they were surrounded by such a vast number of Indian warriors of my creation, became frightened, and Simeon commanded to fire from cannons and rifles, which of course they were unable to do. The soldiers, discouraged, re-

treated in great disorder. Thus Simeon brought upon himself the terrible disgrace of defeat. His estate was confiscated, and to-morrow he is to be executed. All that remains for me to do, therefore," concluded the young devil, "is to release him to-morrow morning. Now, then, who wants my assistance?"

The second small devil (from Tarras) then related his story.

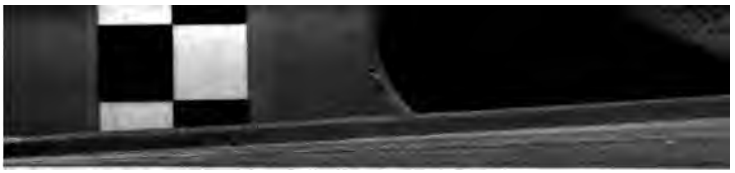
"I do not need any help," he began. "My business is also all right. My work with Tarras will be finished in one week. In the first place I made him grow thin. He afterward became so covetous that he wanted to possess everything he saw, and he spent all the money he had in the purchase of immense quantities of goods. When his capital was gone he still continued to buy with borrowed money, and has become involved in such difficulties that he cannot free himself. At the end of one week the date for the payment of his notes will have expired, and, his goods being seized upon, he

will become a bankrupt; and he also will return to his father."

At the conclusion of this narrative they inquired of the third devil how things had fared between him and Ivan.

"Well," said he, "my report is not so encouraging. The first thing I did was to spit into his jug of *quass* [a sour drink made from rye], which made him sick at his stomach. He afterward went to plow his summer-fallow, but I made the soil so hard that the plow could scarcely penetrate it. I thought the Fool would not succeed, but he started to work nevertheless. Moaning with pain, he still continued to labor. I broke one plow, but he replaced it with another, fixing it securely, and resumed work. Going beneath the surface of the ground I took hold of the plowshares, but did not succeed in stopping Ivan. He pressed so hard, and the colter was so sharp, that my hands were cut; and despite my utmost efforts, he went over all but a small portion of the field."

He concluded with: "Come, brothers, and help me, for if we do not conquer him our whole enterprise will be a failure. If the Fool is permitted successfully to conduct his farming, they will have no need, for he will support his brothers."



CHAPTER III.

IVAN having succeeded in plowing all but a small portion of his land, he returned the next day to finish it. The pain in his stomach continued, but he felt that he must go on with his work. He tried to start his plow, but it would not move; it seemed to have struck a hard root. It was the small devil in the ground who had wound his feet around the plowshares and held them.

"This is strange," thought Ivan. "There were never any roots here before, and this is surely one."

Ivan put his hand in the ground, and, feeling something soft, grasped and pulled it out. It was like a root in appearance, but seemed to possess life. Holding it up he saw that it was a little devil. Disgusted, he exclaimed, "See

the nasty thing," and he proceeded to strike it a blow, intending to kill it, when the young devil cried out:

"Do not kill me, and I will grant your every wish."

"What can you do for me?"

"Tell me what it is you most wish for," the little devil replied.

Ivan, peasant-fashion, scratched the back of his head as he thought, and finally he said:

"I am dreadfully sick at my stomach. Can you cure me?"

"I can," the little devil said.

"Then do so."

The little devil bent toward the earth and began searching for roots, and when he found them he gave them to Ivan, saying: "If you will swallow some of these you will be immediately cured of whatsoever disease you are afflicted with."

Ivan did as directed, and obtained instant relief.

"I beg of you to let me go now," the little devil pleaded; "I will pass into the earth, never to return."

"Very well; you may go, and God bless you;" and as Ivan pronounced the name of God—the small devil disappeared into the earth like a flash, and only a slight opening in the ground remained.

Ivan placed in his hat what roots he had left, and proceeded to plow. Soon finishing his work, he turned his plow over and returned home.

When he reached the house he found his brother Simeon and his wife seated at the supper-table. His estate had been confiscated, and he himself had barely escaped execution by making his way out of prison, and having nothing to live upon had come back to his father for support.

Turning to Ivan he said: "I came to ask you to care for us until I can find something to do."

"Very well," Ivan replied; "you may remain with us."

Just as Ivan was about to sit down to the table Simeon's wife made a wry face, indicating that she did not like the smell of Ivan's sheep-skin coat; and turning to her husband she said, "I shall not sit at the table with a moujik [peasant] who smells like that."

Simeon the soldier turned to his brother and said: "My lady objects to the smell of your clothes. You may eat in the porch."

Ivan said: "Very well, it is all the same to me. I will soon have to go and feed my horse any way."

Ivan took some bread in one hand, and his *kaftan* (coat) in the other, and left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE small devil finished with Simeon that night, and according to agreement went to the assistance of his comrade who had charge of Ivan, that he might help to conquer the Fool. He went to the field and searched everywhere, but could find nothing but the hole through which the small devil had disappeared.

"Well, this is strange," he said; "something must have happened to my companion, and I will have to take his place and continue the work he began. The Fool is through with his plowing, so I must look about me for some other means of compassing his destruction. I must overflow his meadow and prevent him from cutting the grass."

The little devil accordingly overflowed the meadow with muddy water, and, when Ivan

went at dawn next morning with his scythe set and sharpened and tried to mow the grass, he found that it resisted all his efforts and would not yield to the implement as usual.

Many times Ivan tried to cut the grass, but always without success. At last, becoming weary of the effort, he decided to return home and have his scythe again sharpened, and also to procure a quantity of bread, saying: "I will come back here and will not leave until I have mown all the meadow, even if it should take a whole week."

Hearing this, the little devil became thoughtful, saying: "That Ivan is a *koolak* [hard case], and I must think of some other way of conquering him."

Ivan soon returned with his sharpened scythe and started to mow.

The small devil hid himself in the grass, and as the point of the scythe came down he buried it in the earth and made it almost impossible for Ivan to move the implement. He, how-

ever, succeeded in mowing all but one small spot in the swamp, where again the small devil hid himself, saying: "Even if he should cut my hands I will prevent him from accomplishing his work."

When Ivan came to the swamp he found that the grass was not very thick. Still, the scythe would not work, which made him so angry that he worked with all his might, and one blow more powerful than the others cut off a portion of the small devil's tail, who had hidden himself there.

Despite the little devil's efforts he succeeded in finishing his work, when he returned home and ordered his sister to gather up the grass while he went to another field to cut rye. But the devil preceded him there, and fixed the rye in such a manner that it was almost impossible for Ivan to cut it; however, after continuous hard labor he succeeded, and when he was through with the rye he said to himself: "Now I will start to mow oats."

On hearing this, the little devil thought to

himself: "I could not prevent him from mowing the rye, but I will surely stop him from mowing the oats when the morning comes."

Early next day, when the devil came to the field, he found that the oats had been already mowed. Ivan did it during the night, so as to avoid the loss that might have resulted from the grain being too ripe and dry. Seeing that Ivan again had escaped him, the little devil became greatly enraged, saying:

"He cut me all over and made me tired, that fool. I did not meet such misfortune even on the battle-field. He does not even sleep;" and the devil began to swear. "I cannot follow him," he continued. "I will go now to the heaps and make everything rotten."

Accordingly he went to a heap of the new-mown grain and began his fiendish work. After wetting it he built a fire and warmed himself, and soon was fast asleep.

Ivan harnessed his horse, and, with his sister, went to bring the rye home from the field.

After lifting a couple of sheaves from the first heap his pitchfork came into contact with the little devil's back, which caused the latter to howl with pain and to jump around in every direction. Ivan exclaimed:

"See here! What nastiness! You again here?"

"I am another one!" said the little devil. "That was my brother. I am the one who was sent to your brother Simeon."

"Well," said Ivan, "it matters not who you are. I will fix you all the same."

As Ivan was about to strike the first blow the devil pleaded: "Let me go and I will do you no more harm. I will do whatever you wish."

"What can you do for me?" asked Ivan.

"I can make soldiers from almost anything."

"And what will they be good for?"

"Oh, they will do everything for you!"

"Can they sing?"

"They can."

"Well, make them.'

"Take a bunch of straw and scatter it on the ground, and see if each straw will not turn into a soldier."

Ivan shook the straws on the ground, and, as he expected, each straw turned into a soldier, and they began marching with a band at their head.

"*Ishty* [look you], that was well done! How it will delight the village maidens!" he exclaimed.

The small devil now said: "Let me go; you do not need me any longer."

But Ivan said: "No, I will not let you go just yet. You have converted the straw into soldiers, and now I want you to turn them again into straw, as I cannot afford to lose it, but I want it with the grain on."

The devil replied: "Say: 'So many soldiers, so much straw.'"

Ivan did as directed, and got back his rye with the straw.

The small devil again begged for his release.

Ivan, taking him from the pitchfork, said: "With God's blessing you may depart"; and, as before at the mention of God's name, the little devil was hurled into the earth like a flash, and nothing was left but the hole to show where he had gone.

Soon afterward Ivan returned home, to find his brother Tarras and his wife there. Tarras-Briukhan could not pay his debts, and was forced to flee from his creditors and seek refuge under his father's roof. Seeing Ivan, he said: "Well, Ivan, may we remain here until I start in some new business?"

Ivan replied as he had before to Simeon: "Yes, you are perfectly welcome to remain here as long as it suits you."

With that announcement he removed his coat and seated himself at the supper-table with the others. But Tarras-Briukhan's wife objected to the smell of his clothes, saying: "I cannot eat with a fool; neither can I stand the smell."

Then Tarras-Briukhan said: "Ivan, from your clothes there comes a bad smell; go and eat by yourself in the porch."

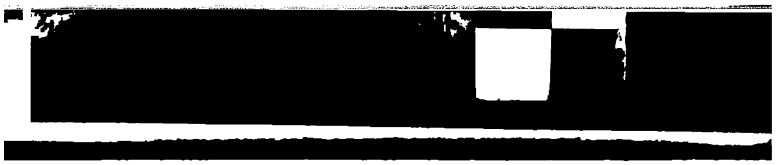
"Very well," said Ivan; and he took some bread and went out as ordered, saying, "It is time for me to feed my mare."

CHAPTER V.

THE small devil who had charge of Tarras finished with him that night, and according to agreement proceeded to the assistance of the other two to help them conquer Ivan. Arriving at the plowed field he looked around for his comrades, but found only the hole through which one had disappeared; and on going to the meadow he discovered the severed tail of the other, and in the rye-field he found yet another hole.

"Well," he thought, "it is quite clear that my comrades have met with some great misfortune, and that I will have to take their places and arrange the feud between the brothers."

The small devil then went in search of Ivan. But he, having finished with the field, was nowhere to be found. He had gone to the forest



to cut logs to build homes for his brothers, as they found it inconvenient for so many to live under the same roof.

The small devil at last discovered his whereabouts, and going to the forest climbed into the branches of the trees and began to interfere with Ivan's work. Ivan cut down a tree, which failed, however, to fall to the ground, becoming entangled in the branches of other trees; yet he succeeded in getting it down after a hard struggle. In chopping down the next tree he met with the same difficulties, and also with the third. Ivan had supposed he could cut down fifty trees in a day, but he succeeded in chopping but ten before darkness put an end to his labors for a time. He was now exhausted, and, perspiring profusely, he sat down alone in the woods to rest. He soon after resumed his work, cutting down one more tree; but the effort gave him a pain in his back, and he was obliged to rest again. Seeing this, the small devil was full of joy.

"Well," he thought, "now he is exhausted and will stop work, and I will rest also." He then seated himself on some branches and rejoiced.

Ivan again arose, however, and, taking his axe, gave the tree a terrific blow from the opposite side, which felled it instantly to the ground, carrying the little devil with it; and Ivan, proceeding to cut the branches, found the devil alive. Very much astonished, Ivan exclaimed:

"Look you! Such nastiness! Are you again here?"

"I am another one," replied the devil. "I was with your brother Tarras."

"Well," said Ivan, "that makes no difference; I will fix you." And he was about to strike him a blow with the axe when the devil pleaded:

"Do not kill me, and whatever you wish you shall have."

Ivan asked, "What can you do?"

"I can make for you all the money you wish."

Ivan then told the devil he might proceed, whereupon the latter began to explain to him how he might become rich.

"Take," said he to Ivan, "the leaves of this oak tree and rub them in your hands, and the gold will fall to the ground."

Ivan did as he was directed, and immediately the gold began to drop about his feet; and he remarked:

"This will be a fine trick to amuse the village boys with."

"Can I now take my departure?" asked the devil, to which Ivan replied, "With God's blessing you may go."

At the mention of the name of God, the devil disappeared into the earth.

CHAPTER VI.

THE brothers, having finished their houses, moved into them and lived apart from their father and brother. Ivan, when he had completed his plowing, made a great feast, to which he invited his brothers, telling them that he had plenty of beer for them to drink. The brothers, however, declined Ivan's hospitality, saying, "We have seen the beer moujiks drink, and want none of it."

Ivan then gathered around him all the peasants in the village and with them drank beer until he became intoxicated, when he joined the *Khorovody* (a street gathering of the village boys and girls, who sing songs), and told them they must sing his praises, saying that in return he would show them such sights as they had

never before seen in their lives. The little girls laughed and began to sing songs praising Ivan, and when they had finished they said: "Very well; now give us what you said you would."

Ivan replied, "I will soon show you," and, taking an empty bag in his hand, he started for the woods. The little girls laughed as they said, "What a fool he is!" and resuming their play they forgot all about him.

Some time after Ivan suddenly appeared among them carrying in his hand the bag, which was now filled.

"Shall I divide this with you?" he said.

"Yes; divide!" they sang in chorus.

So Ivan put his hand into the bag and drew it out full of gold coins, which he scattered among them.

"Batiushka," they cried as they ran to gather up the precious pieces.

The moujiks then appeared on the scene and began to fight among themselves for the pos-

session of the yellow objects. In the mêlée one old woman was nearly crushed to death.

Ivan laughed and was greatly amused at the sight of so many persons quarrelling over a few pieces of gold.

"Oh! you duratchki" (little fools), he said, "why did you almost crush the life out of the old grandmother? Be more gentle. I have plenty more, and I will give them to you;" whereupon he began throwing about more of the coins.

The people gathered around him, and Ivan continued throwing until he emptied his bag. They clamored for more, but Ivan replied: "The gold is all gone. Another time I will give you more. Now we will resume our singing and dancing."

The little children sang, but Ivan said to them, "Your songs are no good."

The children said, "Then show us how to sing better."

To this Ivan replied, "I will show you peo-

ple who can sing better than you." With this remark Ivan went to the barn and, securing a bundle of straw, did as the little devil had directed him; and presently a regiment of soldiers appeared in the village street, and he ordered them to sing and dance.

The people were astonished and could not understand how Ivan had produced the strangers.

The soldiers sang for some time, to the great delight of the villagers; and when Ivan commanded them to stop they instantly ceased.

Ivan then ordered them off to the barn, telling the astonished and mystified moujiks that they must not follow him. Reaching the barn, he turned the soldiers again into straw and went home to sleep off the effects of his debauch.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Ivan's exploits were the talk of the village, and news of the wonderful things he had done reached the ears of his brother Simeon, who immediately went to Ivan to learn all about it.

"Explain to me," he said; "from whence did you bring the soldiers, and where did you take them?"

"And what do you wish to know for?" asked Ivan.

"Why, with soldiers we can do almost anything we wish—whole kingdoms can be conquered," replied Simeon.

This information greatly surprised Ivan, who said: "Well, why did you not tell me about this before? I can make as many as you want."

Ivan then took his brother to the barn, but

he said: "While I am willing to create the soldiers, you must take them away from here; for if it should become necessary to feed them, all the food in the village would last them only one day."

Simeon promised to do as Ivan wished, whereupon Ivan proceeded to convert the straw into soldiers. Out of one bundle of straw he made an entire regiment; in fact, so many soldiers appeared as if by magic that there was not a vacant spot in the field.

Turning to Simeon Ivan said, "Well, is there a sufficient number?"

Beaming with joy, Simeon replied: "Enough! enough! Thank you, Ivan!"

"Glad you are satisfied," said Ivan, "and if you wish more I will make them for you. I have plenty of straw now."

Simeon divided his soldiers into battalions and regiments, and after having drilled them he went forth to fight and to conquer.

Simeon had just gotten safely out of the village with his soldiers when Tarras, the other

brother, appeared before Ivan—he also having heard of the previous day's performance and wanting to learn the secret of his power. He sought Ivan, saying: "Tell me the secret of your supply of gold, for if I had plenty of money I could with its assistance gather in all the wealth in the world."

Ivan was greatly surprised on hearing this statement, and said: "You might have told me this before, for I can obtain for you as much money as you wish."

Tarras was delighted, and he said, "You might get me about three bushels."

"Well," said Ivan, "we will go to the woods, or, better still, we will harness the horse, as we could not possibly carry so much money ourselves."

The brothers went to the woods and Ivan proceeded to gather the oak leaves, which he rubbed between his hands, the dust falling to the ground and turning into gold pieces as quickly as it fell.

When quite a pile had accumulated Ivan turned to Tarras and asked if he had rubbed enough leaves into money, whereupon Tarras replied: "Thank you, Ivan; that will be sufficient for this time."

Ivan then said: "If you wish more, come to me and I will rub as much as you want, for there are plenty of leaves."

Tarras, with his *tarantas* (wagon) filled with gold, rode away to the city to engage in trade and increase his wealth; and thus both brothers went their way, Simeon to fight and Tarras to trade.

Simeon's soldiers conquered a kingdom for him and Tarras-Briukhan made plenty of money.

Some time afterward the two brothers met and confessed to each other the source from whence sprang their prosperity, but they were not yet satisfied.

Simeon said: "I have conquered a kingdom and enjoy a very pleasant life, but I have not

sufficient money to procure food for my soldiers;" while Tarras confessed that he was the possessor of enormous wealth, but the care of it caused him much uneasiness.

"Let us go again to our brother," said Simeon; "I will order him to make more soldiers and will give them to you, and you may then tell him that he must make more money so that we can buy food for them."

They went again to Ivan, and Simeon said: "I have not sufficient soldiers; I want you to make me at least two divisions more." But Ivan shook his head as he said: "I will not create soldiers for nothing; you must pay me for doing it."

"Well, but you promised," said Simeon.

"I know I did," replied Ivan; "but I have changed my mind since that time."

"But, fool, why will you not do as you promised?"

"For the reason that your soldiers kill men, and I will not make any more for such a cruel

purpose." With this reply Ivan remained stubborn and would not create any more soldiers.

Tarras-Briukhan next approached Ivan and ordered him to make more money; but, as in the case of Tarras, Ivan only shook his head, as he said: "I will not make you any money unless you pay me for doing it. I cannot work without pay."

Tarras then reminded him of his promise.

"I know I promised," replied Ivan; "but still I must refuse to do as you wish."

"But why, fool, will you not fulfill your promise?" asked Tarras.

"For the reason that your gold was the means of depriving Mikhailovna of her cow."

"But how did that happen?" inquired Tarras.

"It happened in this way," said Ivan. "Mikhailovna always kept a cow, and her children had plenty of milk to drink; but some time ago one of her boys came to me to beg for some milk, and I asked, 'Where is your cow?' when

he replied, 'A clerk of Tarras-Briukhan came to our home and offered three gold pieces for her. Our mother could not resist the temptation, and now we have no milk to drink. I gave you the gold pieces for your pleasure, and you put them to such poor use that I will not give you any more.' "

The brothers, on hearing this, took their departure to discuss as to the best plan to pursue in regard to a settlement of their troubles.

Simeon said: "Let us arrange it in this way: I will give you the half of my kingdom, and soldiers to keep guard over your wealth; and you give me money to feed the soldiers in my half of the kingdom."

To this arrangement Tarras agreed, and both the brothers became rulers and very happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

IVAN remained on the farm and worked to support his father, mother, and dumb sister. Once it happened that the old dog, which had grown up on the farm, was taken sick, when Ivan thought he was dying; and, taking pity on the animal, placed some bread in his hat and carried it to him. It happened that when he turned out the bread the root which the little devil had given him fell out also. The old dog swallowed it with the bread and was almost instantly cured, when he jumped up and began to wag his tail as an expression of joy. Ivan's father and mother, seeing the dog cured so quickly, asked by what means he had performed such a miracle.

Ivan replied: "I had some roots which would

cure any disease, and the dog swallowed one of them."

It happened about that time that the Czar's daughter became ill, and her father had it announced in every city, town, and village that whosoever would cure her would be richly rewarded; and if the lucky person should prove to be a single man he would give her in marriage to him.

This announcement, of course, appeared in Ivan's village.

Ivan's father and mother called him and said: "If you have any of those wonderful roots, go and cure the Czar's daughter. You will be much happier for having performed such a kind act—indeed, you will be made happy for all your after life."

"Very well," said Ivan; and he immediately made ready for the journey. As he reached the porch on his way out he saw a poor woman standing directly in his path and holding a broken arm. The woman accosted him, saying:

"I was told that you could cure me, and will you not please do so, as I am powerless to do anything for myself?"

Ivan replied: "Very well, my poor woman; I will relieve you if I can."

He produced a root which he handed to the poor woman and told her to swallow it.

She did as Ivan told her and was instantly cured, and went away rejoicing that she had recovered the use of her arm.

Ivan's father and mother came out to wish him good luck on his journey, and to them he told the story of the poor woman, saying that he had given her his last root. On hearing this his parents were much distressed, as they now believed him to be without the means of curing the Czar's daughter, and began to scold him.

"You had pity for a beggar and gave no thought to the Czar's daughter," they said.

"I have pity for the Czar's daughter also," replied Ivan, after which he harnessed his horse to his wagon and took his seat ready for

his departure; whereupon his parents said: "Where are you going, you fool—to cure the Czar's daughter, and without anything to do it with?"

"Very well," replied Ivan, as he drove away.

In due time he arrived at the palace, and the moment he appeared on the balcony the Czar's daughter was cured. The Czar was overjoyed and ordered Ivan to be brought into his presence. He dressed him in the richest robes and addressed him as his son-in-law. Ivan was married to the Czarevna, and, the Czar dying soon after, Ivan became ruler. Thus the three brothers became rulers in different kingdoms.

CHAPTER IX.

THE brothers lived and reigned. Simeon, the eldest brother, with his straw soldiers took captive the genuine soldiers and trained all alike. He was feared by every one.

Tarras-Briukhan, the other brother, did not squander the gold he obtained from Ivan, but instead greatly increased his wealth, and at the same time lived well. He kept his money in large trunks, and, while having more than he knew what to do with, still continued to collect money from his subjects. The people had to work for the money to pay the taxes which Tarras levied on them, and life was made burdensome to them.

Ivan the Fool did not enjoy his wealth and power to the same extent as did his brothers. As soon as his father-in-law, the late Czar, was

buried, he discarded the Imperial robes which had fallen to him and told his wife to put them away, as he had no further use for them. Having cast aside the insignia of his rank, he once more donned his peasant garb and started to work as of old.

"I felt lonesome," he said, "and began to grow enormously stout, and yet I had no appetite, and neither could I sleep."

Ivan sent for his father, mother, and dumb sister, and brought them to live with him, and they worked with him at whatever he chose to do.

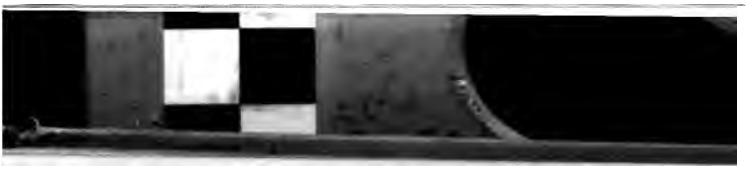
The people soon learned that Ivan was a fool. His wife one day said to him, "The people say you are a fool, Ivan."

"Well, let them think so if they wish," he replied.

His wife pondered this reply for some time, and at last decided that if Ivan was a fool she also was one, and that it would be useless to go contrary to her husband, thinking in her mind

of the old proverb that "where the needle goes there goes the thread also." She therefore cast aside her magnificent robes, and, putting them into the trunk with Ivan's, dressed herself in cheap clothing and joined her dumb sister-in-law, with the intention of learning to work. She succeeded so well that she soon became a great help to Ivan.

Seeing that Ivan was a fool, all the wise men left the kingdom and only the fools remained. They had no money, their wealth consisting only of the products of their labor. But they lived peacefully together, supported themselves in comfort, and had plenty to spare for the needy and afflicted.



CHAPTER X.

THE old devil grew tired of waiting for the good news which he expected the little devils to bring him. He waited in vain to hear of the ruin of the brothers, so he went in search of the emissaries which he had sent to perform that work for him. After looking around for some time, and seeing nothing but the three holes in the ground, he decided that they had not succeeded in their work and that he would have to do it himself.

The old devil next went in search of the brothers, but he could learn nothing of their whereabouts. After some time he found them in their different kingdoms, contented and happy. This greatly incensed the old devil, and he said, "I will now have to accomplish their mission myself."

He first visited Simeon the soldier, and appeared before him as a *voyevoda* (general), saying: "You, Simeon, are a great warrior, and I also have had considerable experience in warfare, and am desirous of serving you."

Simeon questioned the disguised devil, and seeing that he was an intelligent man took him into his service.

The new General taught Simeon how to strengthen his army until it became very powerful. New implements of warfare were introduced. Cannons capable of throwing one hundred balls a minute were also constructed, and these, it was expected, would be of deadly effect in battle.

Simeon, on the advice of his new General, ordered all young men above a certain age to report for drill. On the same advice Simeon established gun-shops, where immense numbers of cannons and rifles were made.

The next move of the new General was to have Simeon declare war against the neighbor-

ing kingdom. This he did, and with his immense army marched into the adjoining territory, which he pillaged and burned, destroying more than half the enemy's soldiers. This so frightened the ruler of that country that he willingly gave up half of his kingdom to save the other half.

Simeon, overjoyed at his success, declared his intention of marching into Indian territory and subduing the Viceroy of that country.

But Simeon's intentions reached the ears of the Indian ruler, who prepared to do battle with him. In addition to having secured all the latest implements of warfare, he added still others of his own invention. He ordered all boys over fourteen and all single women to be drafted into the army, until its proportions became much larger than Simeon's. His cannons and rifles were of the same pattern as Simeon's, and he invented a flying-machine from which bombs could be thrown into the enemy's camp.

Simeon went forth to conquer the Viceroy with full confidence in his own powers to succeed. This time luck forsook him, and instead of being the conqueror he was himself conquered.

The Indian ruler had so arranged his army that Simeon could not even get within shooting distance, while the bombs from the flying-machine carried destruction and terror in their path, completely routing his army, so that Simeon was left alone.

The Viceroy took possession of his kingdom and Simeon had to fly for his life.

Having finished with Simeon, the old devil next approached Tarras. He appeared before him disguised as one of the merchants of his kingdom, and established factories and began to make money. The "merchant" paid the highest price for everything he purchased, and the people ran after him to sell their goods. Through this "merchant" they were enabled to make plenty of money, paying up all their ar-

rears of taxes as well as the others when they came due.

Tarras was overjoyed at this condition of affairs and said: "Thanks to this merchant, now I will have more money than before, and life will be much pleasanter for me."

He wished to erect new buildings, and advertised for workmen, offering the highest prices for all kinds of labor. Tarras thought the people would be as anxious to work as formerly, but instead he was much surprised to learn that they were working for the "merchant." Thinking to induce them to leave the "merchant," he increased his offers, but the former, equal to the emergency, also raised the wages of his workmen. Tarras, having plenty of money, increased the offers still more; but the "merchant" raised them still higher and got the better of him. Thus, defeated at every point, Tarras was compelled to abandon the idea of building.

Tarras next announced that he intended lay-

ing out gardens and erecting fountains, and the work was to be commenced in the fall, but no one came to offer his services, and again he was obliged to forego his intentions. Winter set in, and Tarras wanted some sable fur with which to line his great-coat, and he sent his man to procure it for him; but the servant returned without it, saying: "There are no sables to be had. The 'merchant' has bought them all, paying a very high price for them."

Tarras needed horses and sent a messenger to purchase them, but he returned with the same story as on former occasions—that none were to be found, the "merchant" having bought them all to carry water for an artificial pond he was constructing. Tarras was at last compelled to suspend business, as he could not find any one willing to work for him. They had all gone over to the "merchant's" side. The only dealings the people had with Tarras were when they went to pay their taxes. His money accumulated so fast that he could not find a

place to put it, and his life became miserable. He abandoned all idea of entering upon the new venture, and only thought of how to exist peaceably. This he found it difficult to do, for, turn which way he would, fresh obstacles confronted him. Even his cooks, coachmen, and all his other servants forsook him and joined the "merchant." With all his wealth he had nothing to eat, and when he went to market he found the "merchant" had been there before him and had bought up all the provisions. Still, the people continued to bring him money.

Tarras at last became so indignant that he ordered the "merchant" out of his kingdom. He left, but settled just outside the boundary line, and continued his business with the same result as before, and Tarras was frequently forced to go without food for days. It was rumored that the "merchant" wanted to buy even Tarras himself. On hearing this the latter became very much alarmed and could not decide as to the best course to pursue.

About this time his brother Simeon arrived in the kingdom, and said: "Help me, for I have been defeated and ruined by the Indian Viceroy."

Tarras replied: "How can I help you, when I have had no food myself for two days?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE old devil, having finished with the second brother, went to Ivan the Fool. This time he disguised himself as a General, the same as in the case of Simeon, and, appearing before Ivan, said: "Get an army together. It is disgraceful for the ruler of a kingdom to be without an army. You call your people to assemble, and I will form them into a fine large army."

Ivan took the supposed General's advice, and said: "Well, you may form my people into an army, but you must also teach them to sing the songs I like."

The old devil then went through Ivan's kingdom to secure recruits for the army, saying: "Come, shave your heads [the heads of recruits are always shaved in Russia] and I will give

each of you a red hat and plenty of vodki" (whiskey).

At this the fools only laughed, and said: "We can have all the vodki we want, for we distill it ourselves; and of hats, our little girls make all we want, of any color we please, and with handsome fringes."

Thus was the devil foiled in securing recruits for his army; so he returned to Ivan and said: "Your fools will not volunteer to be soldiers. It will therefore be necessary to force them."

"Very well," replied Ivan, "you may use force if you want to."

The old devil then announced that all the fools must become soldiers, and those who refused, Ivan would punish with death.

The fools went to the General, and said: "You tell us that Ivan will punish with death all those who refuse to become soldiers, but you have omitted to state what will be done with us soldiers. We have been told that we are only to be killed."

"Yes, that is true," was the reply.

The fools on hearing this became stubborn and refused to go.

"Better kill us now if we cannot avoid death, but we will not become soldiers," they declared.

"Oh! you fools," said the old devil, "soldiers may and may not be killed; but if you disobey Ivan's orders you will find certain death at his hands."

The fools remained absorbed in thought for some time and finally went to Ivan to question him in regard to the matter.

On arriving at his house they said: "A General came to us with an order from you that we were all to become soldiers, and if we refused you were to punish us with death. Is it true?"

Ivan began to laugh heartily on hearing this, and said: "Well, how I alone can punish you with death is something I cannot understand. If I was not a fool myself I would be able to explain it to you, but as it is I cannot."

"Well, then, we will not go," they said.

"Very well," replied Ivan, "you need not become soldiers unless you wish to."

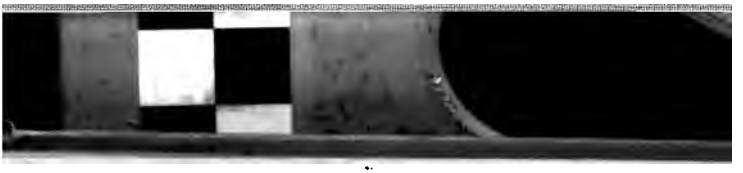
The old devil, seeing his schemes about to prove failures, went to the ruler of Tarakania and became his friend, saying: "Let us go and conquer Ivan's kingdom. He has no money, but he has plenty of cattle, provisions, and various other things that would be useful to us."

The Tarakanian ruler gathered his large army together, and equipping it with cannons and rifles, crossed the boundary line into Ivan's kingdom. The people went to Ivan and said: "The ruler of Tarakania is here with a large army to fight us."

"Let them come," replied Ivan.

The Tarakanian ruler, after crossing the line into Ivan's kingdom, looked in vain for soldiers to fight against; and waiting some time and none appearing, he sent his own warriors to attack the villages.

They soon reached the first village, which



they began to plunder. The fools of both sexes looked calmly on, offering not the least resistance when their cattle and provisions were being taken from them. On the contrary, they invited the soldiers to come and live with them, saying: "If you, dear friends, find it is difficult to earn a living in your own land, come and live with us, where everything is plentiful."

The soldiers decided to remain, finding the people happy and prosperous, with enough surplus food to supply many of their neighbors. They were surprised at the cordial greetings which they everywhere received, and, returning to the ruler of Tarakania, they said: "We cannot fight with these people — take us to another place. We would much prefer the dangers of actual warfare to this unsoldierly method of subduing the village."

The Tarakanian ruler, becoming enraged, ordered the soldiers to destroy the whole kingdom, plunder the villages, burn the houses and provisions, and slaughter the cattle.

"Should you disobey my orders," said he, "I will have every one of you executed."

The soldiers, becoming frightened, started to do as they were ordered, but the fools wept bitterly, offering no resistance, men, women, and children all joining in the general lamentation.

"Why do you treat us so cruelly?" they cried to the invading soldiers. "Why do you wish to destroy everything we have? If you have more need of these things than we have, why not take them with you and leave us in peace?"

The soldiers, becoming saddened with remorse, refused further to pursue their path of destruction—the entire army scattering in many directions.

CHAPTER XII.

THE old devil, failing to ruin Ivan's kingdom with soldiers, transformed himself into a nobleman, dressed exquisitely, and became one of Ivan's subjects, with the intention of compassing the downfall of his kingdom—as he had done with that of Tarras.

The "nobleman" said to Ivan: "I desire to teach you wisdom and to render you other service. I will build you a palace and factories."

"Very well," said Ivan; "you may live with us."

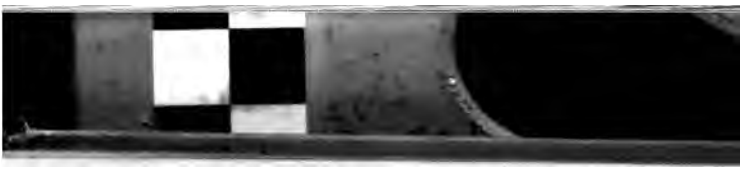
The next day the "nobleman" appeared on the Square with a sack of gold in his hand and a plan for building a house, saying to the people: "You are living like pigs, and I am going to teach you how to live decently. You are to build a house for me according to this plan. I

will superintend the work myself, and will pay you for your services in gold," showing them at the same time the contents of his sack.

The fools were amused. They had never before seen any money. Their business was conducted entirely by exchange of farm products or by hiring themselves out to work by the day in return for whatever they most needed. They therefore glanced at the gold pieces with amazement, and said, "What nice toys they would be to play with!" In return for the gold they gave their services and brought the "nobleman" the produce of their farms.

The old devil was overjoyed as he thought, "Now my enterprise is on a fair road and I will be able to ruin the Fool—as I did his brothers."

The fools obtained sufficient gold to distribute among the entire community, the women and young girls of the village wearing much of it as ornaments, while to the children they gave some pieces to play with on the streets.



When they had secured all they wanted they stopped working and the "nobleman" did not get his house more than half finished. He had neither provisions nor cattle for the year, and ordered the people to bring him both. He directed them also to go on with the building of the palace and factories. He promised to pay them liberally in gold for everything they did. No one responded to his call—only once in awhile a little boy or girl would call to exchange eggs for his gold.

Thus was the "nobleman" deserted, and, having nothing to eat, he went to the village to procure some provisions for his dinner. He went to one house and offered gold in return for a chicken, but was refused, the owner saying: "We have enough of that already and do not want any more."

He next went to a fish-woman to buy some herring, when she, too, refused to accept his gold in return for fish, saying: "I do not wish it, my dear man; I have no children to whom

I can give it to play with. I have three pieces which I keep as curiosities only."

He then went to a peasant to buy bread, but he also refused to accept the gold. "I have no use for it," said he, "unless you wish to give it for Christ's sake; then it will be a different matter, and I will tell my *baba* [old woman] to cut a piece of bread for you."

The old devil was so angry that he ran away from the peasant, spitting and cursing as he went.

Not only did the offer to accept in the name of Christ anger him, but the very mention of the name was like the thrust of a knife in his throat.

The old devil did not succeed in getting any bread, and in his efforts to secure other articles of food he met with the same failure. The people had all the gold they wanted and what pieces they had they regarded as curiosities. They said to the old devil: "If you bring us something else in exchange for food,

or come to ask for Christ's sake, we will give you all you want."

But the old devil had nothing but gold, and was too lazy to work; and being unable to accept anything for Christ's sake, he was greatly enraged.

"What else do you want?" he said. "I will give you gold with which you can buy everything you want, and you need labor no longer."

But the fools would not accept his gold, nor listen to him. Thus the old devil was obliged to go to sleep hungry.

Tidings of this condition of affairs soon reached the ears of Ivan. The people went to him and said: "What shall we do? This nobleman appeared among us; he is well dressed; he wishes to eat and drink of the best, but is unwilling to work, and does not beg for food for Christ's sake. He only offers every one gold pieces. At first we gave him everything he wanted, taking the gold pieces in exchange just as curiosities; but now we have enough of

them and refuse to accept any more from him. What shall we do with him? he may die of hunger!"

Ivan heard all they had to say, and told them to employ him as a shepherd, taking turns in doing so.

The old devil saw no other way out of the difficulty and was obliged to submit.

It soon came the old devil's turn to go to Ivan's house. He went there to dinner and found Ivan's dumb sister preparing the meal. She was often cheated by the lazy people, who while they did not work, yet ate up all the gruel. But she learned to know the lazy people from the condition of their hands. Those with great welts on their hands she invited first to the table, and those having smooth white hands had to take what was left.

The old devil took a seat at the table, but the dumb girl, taking his hands, looked at them, and seeing them white and clean, and with long nails, swore at him and put him from the table.

Ivan's wife said to the old devil: "You must excuse my sister-in-law; she will not allow any one to sit at the table whose hands have not been hardened by toil, so you will have to wait until the dinner is over and then you can have what is left. With it you must be satisfied."

The old devil was very much offended that he was made to eat with "pigs," as he expressed it, and complained to Ivan, saying: "The foolish law you have in your kingdom, that all persons must work, is surely the invention of fools. People who work for a living are not always forced to labor with their hands. Do you think wise men labor so?"

Ivan replied: "Well, what do fools know about it? We all work with our hands."

"And for that reason you are fools," replied the devil. "I can teach you how to use your brains, and you will find such labor more beneficial."

Ivan was surprised at hearing this, and said:

"Well, it is perhaps not without good reason that we are called fools."

"It is not so easy to work with the brain," the old devil said.

"You will not give me anything to eat because my hands have not the appearance of being toil-hardened, but you must understand that it is much harder to do brain-work, and sometimes the head feels like bursting with the effort it is forced to make."

"Then why do you not select some light work that you can perform with your hands?" Ivan asked.

The devil said: "I torment myself with brain-work because I have pity for you fools, for, if I did not torture myself, people like you would remain fools for all eternity. I have exercised my brain a great deal during my life, and now I am able to teach you."

Ivan was greatly surprised and said: "Very well; teach us, so that when our hands are tired we can use our heads to replace them."

The devil promised to instruct the people, and Ivan announced the fact throughout his kingdom.

The devil was willing to teach all those who came to him how to use the head instead of the hands, so as to produce more with the former than with the latter.

In Ivan's kingdom there was a high tower, which was reached by a long, straight ladder leading up to the balcony, and Ivan told the old devil that from the top of the tower every one could see him. So the old devil went up to the balcony and addressed the people.

The fools came in great crowds to hear what the old devil had to say, thinking that he really meant to tell them how to work with the head. But the old devil only told them in words what to do, and did not give them any practical instruction. He said that men working only with their hands could not make a living. The fools did not understand what he said to them and

looked at him in amazement, and then departed for their daily work.

The old devil addressed them for two days from the balcony, and at the end of that time, feeling hungry, he asked the people to bring him some bread. But they only laughed at him and told him if he could work better with his head than with his hands he could also find bread for himself. He addressed the people for yet another day, and they went to hear him from curiosity, but soon left him to return to their work.

Ivan asked, "Well, did the nobleman work with his head?"

"Not yet," they said; "so far he has only talked."

One day, while the old devil was standing on the balcony, he became weak, and, falling down, hurt his head against a pole.

Seeing this, one of the fools ran to Ivan's wife and said, "The gentleman has at last commenced to work with his head."

She ran to the field to tell Ivan, who was much surprised, and said, "Let us go and see him."

He turned his horses' heads in the direction of the tower, where the old devil remained weak from hunger and was still suspended from the pole, with his body swaying back and forth and his head striking the lower part of the pole each time it came in contact with it. While Ivan was looking, the old devil started down the steps head-first—as they supposed, to count them.

"Well," said Ivan, "he told the truth after all—that sometimes from this kind of work the head bursts. This is far worse than welts on the hands."

The old devil fell to the ground head-foremost. Ivan approached him, but at that instant the ground opened and the devil disappeared, leaving only a hole to show where he had gone.

Ivan scratched his head and said: "See here;

such nastiness! This is yet another devil. He looks like the father of the little ones."

Ivan still lives, and people flock to his kingdom. His brothers come to him and he feeds them.

To every one who comes to him and says, "Give us food," he replies: "Very well; you are welcome. We have plenty of everything."

There is only one unchangeable custom observed in Ivan's kingdom: The man with toil-hardened hands is always given a seat at the table, while the possessor of soft white hands must be contented with what is left.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

82 IVAN DISCOVERS THE INCENDIARY.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" . . . . "So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."—ST. MATTHEW xviii., 21-35.

IN a certain village there lived a peasant by the name of Ivan Scherbakoff. He was prosperous, strong, and vigorous, and was considered the hardest worker in the whole village. He had three sons, who supported themselves by their own labor. The eldest was married, the second about to be married, and the youngest too kcare of the horses and occasionally attended to the plowing.

The peasant's wife, Ivanovna, was intelligent and industrious, while her daughter-in-law was a simple, quiet soul, but a hard worker.

There was only one idle person in the household, and that was Ivan's father, a very old man who for seven years had suffered from asthma, and who spent the greater part of his time lying on the brick oven.

Ivan had plenty of everything—three horses, with one colt, a cow with calf, and fifteen sheep. The women made the men's clothes, and in addition to performing all the necessary household labor, also worked in the field; while the men's industry was confined altogether to the farm.

What was left of the previous year's supply of provisions was ample for their needs, and they sold a quantity of oats sufficient to pay their taxes and other expenses.

Thus life went smoothly for Ivan.

The peasant's next-door neighbor was a son of Gordey Ivanoff, called "Gavryl the Lame." It once happened that Ivan had a quarrel with him; but while old man Gordey was yet alive, and Ivan's father was the head of the house-

hold, the two peasants lived as good neighbors should. If the women of one house required the use of a sieve or pail, they borrowed it from the inmates of the other house. The same condition of affairs existed between the men. They lived more like one family, the one dividing his possessions with the other, and perfect harmony reigned between the two families.

If a stray calf or cow invaded the garden of one of the farmers, the other willingly drove it away, saying: "Be careful, neighbor, that your stock does not again stray into my garden; we should put a fence up." In the same way they had no secrets from each other. The doors of their houses and barns had neither bolts nor locks, so sure were they of each other's honesty. Not a shadow of suspicion darkened their daily intercourse.

Thus lived the old people.

In time the younger members of the two households started farming. It soon became apparent that they would not get along as

peacefully as the old people had done, for they began quarrelling without the slightest provocation.

A hen belonging to Ivan's daughter-in-law commenced laying eggs, which the young woman collected each morning, intending to keep them for the Easter holidays. She made daily visits to the barn, where, under an old wagon, she was sure to find the precious egg.

One day the children frightened the hen and she flew over their neighbor's fence and laid her egg in their garden.

Ivan's daughter-in-law heard the hen cackling, but said: "I am very busy just at present, for this is the eve of a holy day, and I must clean and arrange this room. I will go for the egg later on."

When evening came, and she had finished her task, she went to the barn, and as usual looked under the old wagon, expecting to find an egg. But, alas! no egg was visible in the accustomed place.

Greatly disappointed, she returned to the house and inquired of her mother-in-law and the other members of the family if they had taken it. "No," they said, "we know nothing of it."

Taraska, the youngest brother-in-law, coming in soon after, she also inquired of him if he knew anything about the missing egg. "Yes," he replied; "your pretty, crested hen laid her egg in our neighbors' garden, and after she had finished cackling she flew back again over the fence."

The young woman, greatly surprised on hearing this, turned and looked long and seriously at the hen, which was sitting with closed eyes beside the rooster in the chimney-corner. She asked the hen where it laid the egg. At the sound of her voice it simply opened and closed its eyes, but could make no answer.

She then went to the neighbors' house, where she was met by an old woman, who said: "What do you want, young woman?"

Ivan's daughter-in-law replied: "You see,

babushka [grandmother], my hen flew into your yard this morning. Did she not lay an egg there?"

"We did not see any," the old woman replied; "we have our own hens—God be praised!—and they have been laying for this long time. We hunt only for the eggs our own hens lay, and have no use for the eggs other people's hens lay. Another thing I want to tell you, young woman: we do not go into other people's yards to look for eggs."

Now this speech greatly angered the young woman, and she replied in the same spirit in which she had been spoken to, only using much stronger language and speaking at greater length.

The neighbor replied in the same angry manner, and finally the women began to abuse each other and call vile names. It happened that old Ivan's wife, on her way to the well for water, heard the dispute, and joined the others, taking her daughter-in-law's part.

Gavryl's housekeeper, hearing the noise, could not resist the temptation to join the rest and to make her voice heard. As soon as she appeared on the scene, she, too, began to abuse her neighbor, reminding her of many disagreeable things which had happened (and many which had not happened) between them. She became so infuriated during her denunciations that she lost all control of herself, and ran around like some mad creature.

Then all the women began to shout at the same time, each trying to say two words to another's one, and using the vilest language in the quarreller's vocabulary.

"You are such and such," shouted one of the women. "You are a thief, a *schlukha* [a mean, dirty, low creature]; your father-in-law is even now starving, and you have no shame. You beggar, you borrowed my sieve and broke it. You made a large hole in it, and did not buy me another."

"You have our scale-beam," cried another

woman, "and must give it back to me;" whereupon she seized the scale-beam and tried to remove it from the shoulders of Ivan's wife.

In the mêlée which followed they upset the pails of water. They tore the covering from each other's head, and a general fight ensued.

Gavryl's wife had by this time joined in the fracas, and he, crossing the field and seeing the trouble, came to her rescue.

Ivan and his son, seeing that their womenfolk were being badly used, jumped into the midst of the fray, and a fearful fight followed.

Ivan was the most powerful peasant in all the country round, and it did not take him long to disperse the crowd, for they flew in all directions. During the progress of the fight Ivan tore out a large quantity of Gavryl's beard.

By this time a large crowd of peasants had collected, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they persuaded the two families to stop quarrelling.

This was the beginning.

Gavryl took the portion of his beard which Ivan had torn out, and, wrapping it in a paper, went to the *volostnoye* (moujiks' court) and entered a complaint against Ivan.

Holding up the hair, he said, "I did not grow this for that bear Ivan to tear out!"

Gavryl's wife went round among the neighbors, telling them that they must not repeat what she told them, but that she and her husband were going to get the best of Ivan, and that he was to be sent to Siberia.

And so the quarrelling went on.

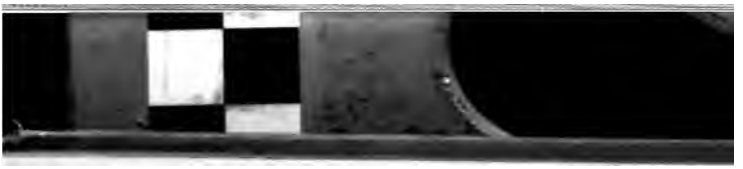
The poor old grandfather, sick with asthma and lying on the brick oven all the time, tried from the first to dissuade them from quarrelling, and begged of them to live in peace; but they would not listen to his good advice. He said to them: "You children are making a great fuss and much trouble about nothing. I beg of you to stop and think of what a little thing has caused all this trouble. It has arisen from only one egg. If our neighbors' children picked it

up, it is all right. God bless them! One egg is of but little value, and without it God will supply sufficient for all our needs."

Ivan's daughter-in-law here interposed and said, "But they called us vile names."

The old grandfather again spoke, saying: "Well, even if they *did* call you bad names, it would have been better to return good for evil, and by your example show them how to speak better. Such conduct on your part would have been best for all concerned." He continued: "Well, you had a fight, you wicked people. Such things sometimes happen, but it would be better if you went afterward and asked forgiveness and buried your grievances out of sight. Scatter them to the four winds of heaven, for if you do not do so it will be the worse for you in the end."

The younger members of the family, still obstinate, refused to profit by the old man's advice, and declared he was not right, and that he only liked to grumble in his old-fashioned way.



Ivan refused to go to his neighbor, as the grandfather wished, saying: "I did not tear out Gavryl's beard. He did it himself, and his son tore my shirt and trousers into shreds."

Ivan entered suit against Gavryl. He first went to the village justice, and not getting satisfaction from him he carried his case to the village court.

While the neighbors were wrangling over the affair, each suing the other, it happened that a perch-bolt from Gavryl's wagon was lost; and the women of Gavryl's household accused Ivan's son of stealing it.

They said: "We saw him in the night-time pass by our window, on his way to where the wagon was standing." "And my *kumushka* [sponsor]," said one of them, "told me that Ivan's son had offered it for sale at the *kabak* [tavern]."

This accusation caused them again to go into court for a settlement of their grievances.

While the heads of the families were trying

to have their troubles settled in court, their home quarrels were constant, and frequently resulted in hand-to-hand encounters. Even the little children followed the example of their elders and quarrelled incessantly.

The women, when they met on the river-bank to do the family washing, instead of attending to their work passed the time in abusing each other, and not infrequently they came to blows.

At first the male members of the families were content with accusing each other of various crimes, such as stealing and like meannesses. But the trouble in this mild form did not last long. They soon resorted to other measures. They began to appropriate one another's things without asking permission, while various articles disappeared from both houses and could not be found. This was done out of revenge.

This example being set by the men, the women and children also followed, and life

soon became a burden to all who took part in the strife.

Ivan Scherbakoff and "Gavryl the Lame" at last laid their trouble before the *mir* (village meeting), in addition to having been in court and calling on the justice of the peace. Both of the latter had grown tired of them and their incessant wrangling. One time Gavryl would succeed in having Ivan fined, and if he was not able to pay it he would be locked up in the cold dreary prison for days. Then it would be Ivan's turn to get Gavryl punished in like manner, and the greater the injury the one could do the other the more delight he took in it.

The success of either in having the other punished only served to increase their rage against each other, until they were like mad dogs in their warfare.

If anything went wrong with one of them he immediately accused his adversary of conspiring to ruin him, and sought revenge without stopping to inquire into the rights of the case.

When the peasants went into court, and had each other fined and imprisoned, it did not soften their hearts in the least. They would only taunt one another on such occasions, saying: "Never mind; I will repay you for all this."

This state of affairs lasted for six years.

Ivan's father, the sick old man, constantly repeated his good advice. He would try to arouse their conscience by saying: "What are you doing, my children? Can you not throw off all these troubles, pay more attention to your business, and suppress your anger against your neighbors? There is no use in your continuing to live in this way, for the more enraged you become against each other the worse it is for you."

Again was the wise advice of the old man rejected.

At the beginning of the seventh year of the existence of the feud it happened that a daughter-in-law of Ivan's was present at a marriage. At

the wedding feast she openly accused Gavryl of stealing a horse. Gavryl was intoxicated at the time and was in no mood to stand the insult, so in retaliation he struck the woman a terrific blow, which confined her to her bed for more than a week. The woman being in delicate health, the worst results were feared.

Ivan, glad of a fresh opportunity to harass his neighbor, lodged a formal complaint before the district-attorney, hoping to rid himself forever of Gavryl by having him sent to Siberia.

On examining the complaint the district-attorney would not consider it, as by that time the injured woman was walking about and as well as ever.

Thus again Ivan was disappointed in obtaining his revenge, and, not being satisfied with the district-attorney's decision, had the case transferred to the court, where he used all possible means to push his suit. To secure the favor of the *starshina* (village mayor) he made him a present of half a gallon of sweet vodki;

and to the mayor's *pisar* (secretary) also he gave presents. By this means he succeeded in securing a verdict against Gavryl. The sentence was that Gavryl was to receive twenty lashes on the bare back, and the punishment was to be administered in the yard which surrounded the court-house.

When Ivan heard the sentence read he looked triumphantly at Gavryl to see what effect it would produce on him. Gavryl turned very white on hearing that he was to be treated with such indignity, and turning his back on the assembly left the room without uttering a word.

Ivan followed him out, and as he reached his horse he heard Gavryl saying: "Very well; my spine will burn from the lashes, but something will burn with greater fierceness in Ivan's household before long."

Ivan, on hearing these words, instantly returned to the court, and going up to the judges said: "Oh! just judges, he threatens to burn my house and all it contains."

A messenger was immediately sent in search of Gavryl, who was soon found and again brought into the presence of the judges.

"Is it true," they asked, "that you said you would burn Ivan's house and all it contained?"

Gavryl replied: "I did not say anything of the kind. You may give me as many lashes as you please—that is, if you have the power to do so. It seems to me that I alone have to suffer for the truth, while he," pointing to Ivan, "is allowed to do and say what he pleases." Gavryl wished to say something more, but his lips trembled, and the words refused to come; so in silence he turned his face toward the wall.

The sight of so much suffering moved even the judges to pity, and, becoming alarmed at Gavryl's continued silence, they said, "He may do both his neighbor and himself some frightful injury."

"See here, my brothers," said one feeble old judge, looking at Ivan and Gavryl as he spoke, "I think you had better try to arrange this

matter peaceably. You, brother Gavryl, did wrong to strike a woman who was in delicate health. It was a lucky thing for you that God had mercy on you and that the woman did not die, for if she had I know not what dire misfortune might have overtaken you! It will not do either of you any good to go on living as you are at present. Go, Gavryl, and make friends with Ivan; I am sure he will forgive you, and we will set aside the verdict just given."

The secretary on hearing this said: "It is impossible to do this on the present case. According to Article 117 this matter has gone too far to be settled peaceably now, as the verdict has been rendered and must be enforced."

But the judges would not listen to the secretary, saying to him: "You talk altogether too much. You must remember that the first thing is to fulfil God's command to 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' and all will be well with you."

Thus with kind words the judges tried to

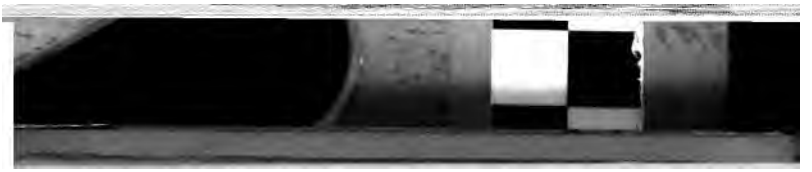
reconcile the two peasants. Their words fell on stony ground, however, for Gavryl would not listen to them.

"I am fifty years old," said Gavryl, "and have a son married, and never from my birth has the lash been applied to my back; but now this bear Ivan has secured a verdict against me which condemns me to receive twenty lashes, and I am forced to bow to this decision and suffer the shame of a public beating. Well, he will have cause to remember this."

At this Gavryl's voice trembled and he stopped speaking, and turning his back on the judges took his departure.

It was about ten versts' distance from the court to the homes of the neighbors, and this Ivan travelled late. The women had already gone out for the cattle. He unharnessed his horse and put everything in its place, and then went into the *izba* (room), but found no one there.

The men had not yet returned from their



work in the field and the women had gone to look for the cattle, so that all about the place was quiet. Going into the room, Ivan seated himself on a wooden bench and soon became lost in thought. He remembered how, when Gavryl first heard the sentence which had been passed upon him, he grew very pale, and turned his face to the wall, all the while remaining silent.

Ivan's heart ached when he thought of the disgrace which he had been the means of bringing upon Gavryl, and he wondered how he would feel if the same sentence had been passed upon him. His thoughts were interrupted by the coughing of his father, who was lying on the oven.

The old man, on seeing Ivan, came down off the oven, and slowly approaching his son seated himself on the bench beside him, looking at him as though ashamed. He continued to cough as he leaned on the table and said, "Well, did they sentence him?"

"Yes, they sentenced him to receive twenty lashes," replied Ivan.

On hearing this the old man sorrowfully shook his head, and said: "This is very bad, Ivan, and what is the meaning of it all? It is indeed very bad, but not so bad for Gavryl as for yourself. Well, suppose his sentence *is* carried out, and he gets the twenty lashes, what will it benefit you?"

"He will not again strike a woman," Ivan replied.

"What is it he will not do? He does not do anything worse than what you are constantly doing!"

This conversation enraged Ivan, and he shouted: "Well, what did he do? He beat a woman nearly to death, and even now he threatens to burn my house! Must I bow to him for all this?"

The old man sighed deeply as he said: "You, Ivan, are strong and free to go wherever you please, while I have been lying for years on the

oven. You think that you know everything and that I do not know anything. No! you are still a child, and as such you cannot see that a kind of madness controls your actions and blinds your sight. The sins of others are ever before you, while you resolutely keep your own behind your back. I know that what Gavryl did was wrong, but if he alone should do wrong there would be no evil in the world. Do you think that all the evil in the world is the work of one man alone? No! it requires two persons to work much evil in the world. You see only the bad in Gavryl's character, but you are blind to the evil that is in your own nature. If he alone were bad and you good, then there would be no wrong."

The old man, after a pause, continued: "Who tore Gavryl's beard? Who destroyed his heaps of rye? Who dragged him into court?—and yet you try to put all the blame on his shoulders. You are behaving very badly yourself, and for that reason you are wrong. I did not act in

such a manner, and certainly I never taught you to do so. I lived in peace with Gavryl's father all the time we were neighbors. We were always the best of friends. If he was without flour his wife would come to me and say, '*Diadia Frol* [Grandfather], we need flour.' I would then say: 'My good woman, go to the warehouse and take as much as you want.' If he had no one to care for his horses I would say, 'Go, *Ivanushka* [diminutive of Ivan], and help him to care for them.' If I required anything I would go to him and say, 'Grandfather Gordey, I need this or that,' and he would always reply, 'Take just whatever you want.' By this means we passed an easy and peaceful life. But what is your life compared with it? As the soldiers fought at Plevna, so are you and Gavryl fighting all the time, only that your battles are far more disgraceful than that fought at Plevna."

The old man went on: "And you call this living! and what a sin it all is! You are a

peasant, and the head of the house; therefore the responsibility of the trouble rests with you. What an example you set your wife and children by constantly quarrelling with your neighbor! Only a short time since your little boy, Taraska, was cursing his aunt Arina, and his mother only laughed at it, saying, 'What a bright child he is!' Is that right? You are to blame for all this. You should think of the salvation of your soul. Is that the way to do it? You say one unkind word to me and I will reply with two. You will give me one slap in the face, and I will retaliate with two slaps. No, my son; Christ did not teach us foolish people to act in such a way. If any one should say an unkind word to you it is better not to answer at all; but if you *do* reply do it kindly, and his conscience will accuse him, and he will regret his unkindness to you. This is the way Christ taught us to live. He tells us that if a person smite us on the one cheek we should offer unto him the other. That is Christ's command to us,

and we should follow it. You should therefore subdue your pride. Am I not right?"

Ivan remained silent, but his father's words had sunk deep into his heart.

The old man coughed and continued: "Do you think Christ thought us wicked? Did he not die that we might be saved? Now you think only of this earthly life. Are you better or worse for thinking alone of it? Are you better or worse for having begun that Plevna battle? Think of your expense at court and the time lost in going back and forth, and what have you gained? Your sons have reached manhood, and are able now to work for you. You are therefore at liberty to enjoy life and be happy. With the assistance of your children you could reach a high state of prosperity. But now your property instead of increasing is gradually growing less, and why? It is the result of your pride. When it becomes necessary for you and your boys to go to the field to work, your enemy instead summons you to appear at

court or before some kind of judicial person. If you do not plow at the proper time and sow at the proper time mother earth will not yield up her products, and you and your children will be left destitute. Why did your oats fail this year? When did you sow them? Were you not quarrelling with your neighbor instead of attending to your work? You have just now returned from the town, where you have been the means of having your neighbor humiliated. You have succeeded in getting him sentenced, but in the end the punishment will fall on your own shoulders. Oh! my child, it would be better for you to attend to your work on the farm and train your boys to become good farmers and honest men. If any one offend you forgive him for Christ's sake, and then prosperity will smile on your work and a light and happy feeling will fill your heart."

Ivan still remained silent.

The old father in a pleading voice continued: "Take an old man's advice. Go and harness

your horse, drive back to the court, and withdraw all these complaints against your neighbor. To-morrow go to him, offer to make peace in Christ's name, and invite him to your house. It will be a holy day (the birth of the Virgin Mary). Get out the samovar and have some vodki, and over both forgive and forget each other's sins, promising not to transgress in the future, and advise your women and children to do the same."

Ivan heaved a deep sigh but felt easier in his heart, as he thought: "The old man speaks the truth;" yet he was in doubt as to how he would put his father's advice into practice.

The old man, surmising his uncertainty, said to Ivan: "Go, Ivanushka; do not delay. Extinguish the fire in the beginning, before it grows large, for then it may be impossible."

Ivan's father wished to say more to him, but was prevented by the arrival of the women, who came into the room chattering like so many magpies. They had already heard of Gavryl's

sentence, and of how he threatened to set fire to Ivan's house. They found out all about it, and in telling it to their neighbors added their own versions of the story, with the usual exaggeration. Meeting in the pasture-ground, they proceeded to quarrel with Gavryl's women. They related how the latter's daughter-in-law had threatened to secure the influence of the manager of a certain noble's estate in behalf of his friend Gavryl; also that the school-teacher was writing a petition to the Czar himself against Ivan, explaining in detail his theft of the perch-bolt and partial destruction of Gavryl's garden —declaring that half of Ivan's land was to be given to them.

Ivan listened calmly to their stories, but his anger was soon aroused once more, when he abandoned his intention of making peace with Gavryl.

As Ivan was always busy about the household, he did not stop to speak to the wrangling women, but immediately left the room, direct-

ing his steps toward the barn. Before getting through with his work the sun had set and the boys had returned from their plowing. Ivan met them and asked about their work, helping them to put things in order and leaving the broken horse-collar aside to be repaired. He intended to perform some other duties, but it became too dark and he was obliged to leave them till the next day. He fed the cattle, however, and opened the gate that Taraska might take his horses to pasture for the night, after which he closed it again and went into the house for his supper.

By this time he had forgotten all about Gavryl and what his father had said to him. Yet, just as he touched the door-knob, he heard sounds of quarrelling proceeding from his neighbor's house.

"What do I want with that devil?" shouted Gavryl to some one. "He deserves to be killed!"

Ivan stopped and listened for a moment,

when he shook his head threateningly and entered the room. When he came in, the apartment was already lighted. His daughter-in-law was working with her loom, while the old woman was preparing the supper. The eldest son was twining strings for his *lapti* (peasant's shoes made of strips of bark from the linden-tree). The other son was sitting by the table reading a book. The room presented a pleasant appearance, everything being in order and the inmates apparently gay and happy—the only dark shadow being that cast over the household by Ivan's trouble with his neighbor.

Ivan came in very cross, and, angrily throwing aside a cat which lay sleeping on the bench, cursed the women for having misplaced a pail. He looked very sad and serious, and, seating himself in a corner of the room, proceeded to repair the horse-collar. He could not forget Gavryl, however—the threatening words he had used in the court-room and those which Ivan had just heard.

Presently Taraska came in, and after having his supper, put on his sheepskin coat, and, taking some bread with him, returned to watch over his horses for the night. His eldest brother wished to accompany him, but Ivan himself arose and went with him as far as the porch. The night was dark and cloudy and a strong wind was blowing, which produced a peculiar whistling sound that was most unpleasant to the ear. Ivan helped his son to mount his horse, which, followed by a colt, started off on a gallop.

Ivan stood for a few moments looking around him and listening to the clatter of the horse's hoofs as Taraska rode down the village street. He heard him meet other boys on horseback, who rode quite as well as Taraska, and soon all were lost in the darkness.

Ivan remained standing by the gate in a gloomy mood, as he was unable to banish from his mind the harassing thoughts of Gavryl, which the latter's menacing words had in-

spired: "Something will burn with greater fierceness in Ivan's household before long."

"He is so desperate," thought Ivan, "that he may set fire to my house regardless of the danger to his own. At present everything is dry, and as the wind is so high he may sneak from the back of his own building, start a fire, and get away unseen by any of us. He may burn and steal without being found out, and thus go unpunished. I wish I could catch him."

This thought so worried Ivan that he decided not to return to his house, but went out and stood on the street-corner.

"I guess," thought Ivan to himself, "I will take a walk around the premises and examine everything carefully, for who knows what he may be tempted to do?"

Ivan moved very cautiously round to the back of his buildings, not making the slightest noise, and scarcely daring to breathe. Just as he reached a corner of the house he looked

toward the fence, and it seemed to him that he saw something moving, and that it was slowly creeping toward the corner of the house opposite to where he was standing. He stepped back quickly and hid himself in the shadow of the building. Ivan stood and listened, but all was quiet. Not a sound could be heard but the moaning of the wind through the branches of the trees, and the rustling of the leaves as it caught them up and whirled them in all directions. So dense was the darkness that it was at first impossible for Ivan to see more than a few feet beyond where he stood.

After a time, however, his sight becoming accustomed to the gloom, he was enabled to see for a considerable distance. The plow and his other farming implements stood just where he had placed them. He could see also the opposite corner of the house. He looked in every direction, but no one was in sight, and he thought to himself that his imagination must have played him some trick, leading him to be-

lieve that some one was moving when there really was no one there.

Still, Ivan was not satisfied, and decided to make a further examination of the premises. As on the previous occasion, he moved so very cautiously that he could not hear even the sound of his own footsteps. He had taken the precaution to remove his shoes, that he might step the more noiselessly. When he reached the corner of the barn it again seemed to him that he saw something moving, this time near the plow; but it quickly disappeared. By this time Ivan's heart was beating very fast, and he was standing in a listening attitude when a sudden flash of light illumined the spot, and he could distinctly see the figure of a man seated on his haunches with his back turned toward him, and in the act of lighting a bunch of straw which he held in his hand! Ivan's heart began to beat yet faster, and he became terribly excited, walking up and down with rapid strides, but without making a noise.

Ivan said: "Well, now, he cannot get away, for he will be caught in the very act."

Ivan had taken a few more steps when suddenly a bright light flamed up, but not in the same spot in which he had seen the figure of the man sitting. Gavryl had lighted the straw, and running to the barn held it under the edge of the roof, which began to burn fiercely; and by the light of the fire he could distinctly see his neighbor standing.

As an eagle springs at a skylark, so sprang Ivan at Gavryl, saying: "I will tear you into pieces! You shall not get away from me this time!"

But "Gavryl the Lame," hearing footsteps, wrenched himself free from Ivan's grasp and ran like a hare past the buildings.

Ivan, now terribly excited, shouted, "You shall not escape me!" and started in pursuit; but just as he reached him and was about to grasp the collar of his coat, Gavryl succeeded in jumping to one side, and Ivan's coat became

entangled in something and he was thrown violently to the ground. Jumping quickly to his feet he shouted, "*Karaool! derji!*" (watch! catch!)

While Ivan was regaining his feet Gavryl succeeded in reaching his house, but Ivan followed so quickly that he caught up with him before he could enter. Just as he was about to grasp him he was struck on the head with some hard substance. He had been hit on the temple as with a stone. The blow was struck by Gavryl, who had picked up an oaken stave, and with it gave Ivan a terrible blow on the head.

Ivan was stunned, and bright sparks danced before his eyes, while he swayed from side to side like a drunken man, until finally all became dark and he sank to the ground unconscious.

When he recovered his senses, Gavryl was nowhere to be seen, but all around him was as light as day. Strange sounds proceeded from the direction of his house, and turning his face

that way he saw that his barns were on fire. The rear parts of both were already destroyed, and the flames were leaping toward the front. Fire, smoke, and bits of burning straw were being rapidly whirled by the high wind over to where his house stood, and he expected every moment to see it burst into flames.

"What is this, brother?" Ivan cried out, as he beat his thighs with his hands. "I should have stopped to snatch the bunch of burning straw, and, throwing it on the ground, should have extinguished it with my feet!"

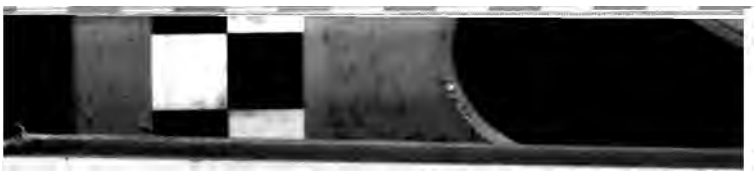
Ivan tried to cry out and arouse his people, but his lips refused to utter a word. He next tried to run, but he could not move his feet, and his legs seemed to twist themselves around each other. After several attempts he succeeded in taking one or two steps, when he again began to stagger and gasp for breath. It was some moments before he made another attempt to move, but after considerable exertion he finally reached the barn, the rear of

which was by this time entirely consumed; and the corner of his house had already caught fire. Dense volumes of smoke began to pour out of the room, which made it difficult to approach.

A crowd of peasants had by this time gathered, but they found it impossible to save their homes, so they carried everything which they could to a place of safety. The cattle they drove into neighboring pastures and left some one to care for them.

The wind carried the sparks from Ivan's house to Gavryl's, and it, too, took fire and was consumed. The wind continued to increase with great fury, and the flames spread to both sides of the street, until in a very short time more than half the village was burned.

The members of Ivan's household had great difficulty in getting out of the burning building, but the neighbors rescued the old man and carried him to a place of safety, while the women escaped in only their night-clothes. Everything was burned, including the cattle and all the



farm implements. The women lost their trunks, which were filled with quantities of clothing, the accumulation of years. The storehouse and all the provisions perished in the flames, not even the chickens being saved.

Gavryl, however, more fortunate than Ivan, saved his cattle and a few other things

The village was burning all night.

Ivan stood near his home, gazing sadly at the burning building, and he kept constantly repeating to himself: "I should have taken away the bunch of burning straw, and have stamped out the fire with my feet."

But when he saw his home fall in a smouldering heap, in spite of the terrible heat he sprang into the midst of it and carried out a charred log. The women seeing him, and fearing that he would lose his life, called to him to come back, but he would not pay any attention to them and went a second time to get a log. Still weak from the terrible blow which Gavryl had given him, he was overcome by the heat,

and fell into th midst of the burning mass. Fortunately, his eldest son saw him fall, and rushing into the fire succeeded in getting hold of him and carrying him out of it. Ivan's hair, beard, and clothing were burned entirely off. His hands were also frightfully injured, but he seemed indifferent to pain.

"Grief drove him crazy," the people said.

The fire was growing less, but Ivan still stood where he could see it, and kept repeating to himself, "I should have taken," etc.

The morning after the fire the *starosta* (village elder) sent his son to Ivan to tell him that the old man, his father, was dying, and wanted to see him to bid him good-bye.

In his grief Ivan had forgotten all about his father, and could not understand what was being said to him. In a dazed way he asked: "What father? Whom does he want?"

The elder's son again repeated his father's message to Ivan. "Your aged parent is at our house dying, and he wants to see you and bid

you good-bye. Won't you go now, uncle Ivan?" the boy said.

Finally Ivan understood, and followed the elder's son.

When Ivan's father was carried from the oven, he was slightly injured by a big bunch of burning straw falling on him just as he reached the street. To insure his safety he was removed to the elder's house, which stood a considerable distance from his late home, and where it was not likely that the fire would reach it.

When Ivan arrived at the elder's home he found only the latter's wife and children, who were all seated on the brick oven. The old man was lying on a bench holding a lighted candle in his hand (a Russian custom when a person is dying). Hearing a noise, he turned his face toward the door, and when he saw it was his son he tried to move. He motioned for Ivan to come nearer, and when he did so he whispered in a trembling voice: "Well, Ivan-

ushka, did I not tell you before what would be the result of this sad affair? Who set the village on fire?"

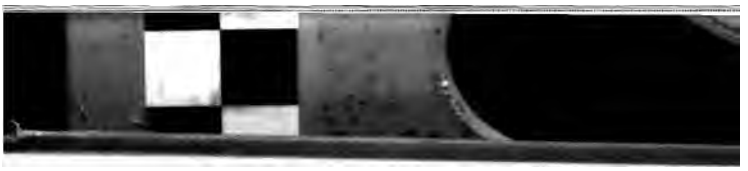
"He, he, *batiushka* [little father]; he did it. I caught him. He placed the bunch of burning straw to the barn in my presence. Instead of running after him, I should have snatched the bunch of burning straw and throwing it on the ground have stamped it out with my feet; and then there would have been no fire."

"Ivan," said the old man, "death is fast approaching me, and remember that you also will have to die. Who did this dreadful thing? Whose is the sin?"

Ivan gazed at the noble face of his dying father and was silent. His heart was too full for utterance.

"In the presence of God," the old man continued, "whose is the sin?"

It was only now that the truth began to dawn upon Ivan's mind, and that he realized how foolish he had acted. He sobbed bitterly,



and fell on his knees before his father, and, crying like a child, said:

"My dear father, forgive me, for Christ's sake, for I am guilty before God and before you!"

The old man transferred the lighted candle from his right hand to the left, and, raising the former to his forehead, tried to make the sign of the cross, but owing to weakness was unable to do so.

"Glory to Thee, O Lord! Glory to Thee!" he exclaimed; and turning his dim eyes toward his son, he said: "See here, Ivanushka! Ivanushka, my dear son!"

"What, my dear father?" Ivan asked.

"What are you going to do," replied the old man, "now that you have no home?"

Ivan cried and said: "I do not know how we shall live now."

The old man closed his eyes and made a movement with his lips, as if gathering his feeble strength for a final effort. Slowly opening his eyes, he whispered:

"Should you live according to God's commands you will be happy and prosperous again."

The old man was now silent for awhile, and then, smiling sadly, he continued:

"See here, Ivanushka, keep silent concerning this trouble, and do not tell who set the village on fire. Forgive one sin of your neighbor's, and God will forgive two of yours."

Grasping the candle with both hands, Ivan's father heaved a deep sigh, and, stretching himself out on his back, yielded up the ghost.

* * * * * * *

Ivan for once accepted his father's advice. He did not betray Gavryl, and no one ever learned the origin of the fire.

Ivan's heart became more kindly disposed toward his old enemy, feeling that much of the fault in connection with this sad affair rested with himself.

Gavryl was greatly surprised that Ivan did

not denounce him before all the villagers, and at first he stood in much fear of him, but he soon afterward overcame this feeling.

The two peasants ceased to quarrel, and their families followed their example. While they were building new houses, both families lived beneath the same roof, and when they moved into their respective homes, Ivan and Gavryl lived on as good terms as their fathers had done before them.

Ivan remembered his dying father's command, and took deeply to heart the evident warning of God that *a fire should be extinguished in the beginning*. If any one wronged him he did not seek for revenge, but instead made every effort to settle the matter peaceably. If any one spoke to him unkindly, he did not answer in the same way, but replied softly, and tried to persuade the person not to speak evil. He taught the women and children of his household to do the same.

Ivan Scherbakoff was now a reformed man.

He lived well and peacefully, and again became prosperous.

Let us, therefore, have peace, live in brotherly love and kindness, and we will be happy.

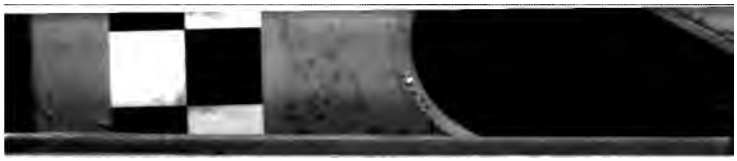
"POLIKUSHKA;"

OR,

The Lot of a Wicked Court Servant.

9

"POLIKUSHKA'S" DESPAIR.



"POLIKUSHKA."

CHAPTER I.

POLIKEY was a court man—one of the staff of servants belonging to the court household of a *boyarinia* (lady of the nobility).

He held a very insignificant position on the estate, and lived in a rather poor, small house with his wife and children.

The house was built by the deceased nobleman whose widow he still continued to serve, and may be described as follows: The four walls surrounding the one *izba* (room) were built of stone, and the interior was ten yards square. A Russian stove stood in the centre, around which was a free passage. Each corner was

fenced off as a separate inclosure to the extent of several feet, and the one nearest to the door (the smallest of all) was known as "Polikey's corner." Elsewhere in the room stood the bed (with quilt, sheet, and cotton pillows), the cradle (with a baby lying therein), and the three-legged table, on which the meals were prepared and the family washing was done. At the latter also Polikey was at work on the preparation of some materials for use in his profession—that of an amateur veterinary surgeon. A calf, some hens, the family clothes and household utensils, together with seven persons, filled the little home to the utmost of its capacity It would indeed have been almost impossible for them to move around had it not been for the convenience of the stove, on which some of them slept at night, and which served as a table in the day-time.

It seemed hard to realize how so many persons managed to live in such close quarters.

Polikey's wife, Akulina, did the washing,

spun and wove, bleached her linen, cooked and baked, and found time also to quarrel and gossip with her neighbors.

The monthly allowance of food which they received from the noblewoman's house was amply sufficient for the whole family, and there was always enough meal left to make mash for the cow. Their fuel they got free, and likewise the food for the cattle. In addition they were given a small piece of land on which to raise vegetables. They had a cow, a calf, and a number of chickens to care for.

Polikey was employed in the stables to take care of two stallions, and, when necessary, to bleed the horses and cattle and clean their hoofs.

In his treatment of the animals he used syringes, plasters, and various other remedies and appliances of his own invention. For these services he received whatever provisions were required by his family, and a certain sum of money—all of which would have been sufficient

to enable them to live comfortably and even happily, if their hearts had not been filled with the shadow of a great sorrow.

This shadow darkened the lives of the entire family.

Polikey, while young, was employed in a horse-breeding establishment in a neighboring village. The head stableman was a notorious horse-thief, known far and wide as a great rogue, who, for his many misdeeds, was finally exiled to Siberia. Under his instruction Polikey underwent a course of training, and, being but a boy, was easily induced to perform many evil deeds. He became so expert in the various kinds of wickedness practised by his teacher that, though he many times would gladly have abandoned his evil ways, he could not, owing to the great hold these early-formed habits had upon him. His father and mother died when he was but a child, and he had no one to point out to him the paths of virtue.

In addition to his other numerous shortcom-

ings, Polikey was fond of strong drink. He also had a habit of appropriating other people's property, when the opportunity offered of his doing so without being seen. Collar-straps, padlocks, perch-bolts, and things even of greater value belonging to others found their way with remarkable rapidity and in great quantities to Polikey's home. He did not, however, keep such things for his own use, but sold them whenever he could find a purchaser. His payment consisted chiefly of whiskey, though sometimes he received cash.

This sort of employment, as his neighbors said, was both light and profitable; it required neither education nor labor. It had one drawback, however, which was calculated to reconcile his victims to their losses: Though he could for a time have all his needs supplied without expending either labor or money, there was always the possibility of his methods being discovered; and this result was sure to be followed by a long term of imprisonment. This

impending danger made life a burden for Polikey and his family.

Such a setback indeed very nearly happened to Polikey early in his career. He married while still young, and God gave him much happiness. His wife, who was a shepherd's daughter, was a strong, intelligent, hard-working woman. She bore him many children, each of whom was said to be better than the preceding one.

Polikey still continued to steal, but once was caught with some small articles belonging to others in his possession. Among them was a pair of leather reins, the property of another peasant, who beat him severely and reported him to his mistress.

From that time on Polikey was an object of suspicion, and he was twice again detected in similar escapades. By this time the people began to abuse him, and the clerk of the court threatened to recruit him into the army as a soldier (which is regarded by the peasants as

a great punishment and disgrace). His noble mistress severely reprimanded him; his wife wept from grief for his downfall, and everything went from bad to worse.

Polikey, notwithstanding his weakness, was a good-natured sort of man, but his love of strong drink had so overcome every moral instinct that at times he was scarcely responsible for his actions. This habit he vainly endeavored to overcome. It often happened that when he returned home intoxicated, his wife, losing all patience, roundly cursed him and cruelly beat him. At times he would cry like a child, and bemoan his fate, saying: "Unfortunate man that I am, what shall I do? *Let my eyes burst into pieces* if I do not forever give up the vile habit! I will not again touch vodki."

In spite of all his promises of reform, but a short period (perhaps a month) would elapse when Polikey would again mysteriously disappear from his home and be lost for several days on a spree.

"From what source does he get the money he spends so freely?" the neighbors inquired of each other, as they sadly shook their heads.

One of his most unfortunate exploits in the matter of stealing was in connection with a clock which belonged to the estate of his mistress. The clock stood in the private office of the noblewoman, and was so old as to have outlived its usefulness, and was simply kept as an heirloom. It so happened that Polikey went into the office one day when no one was present but himself, and, seeing the old clock, it seemed to possess a peculiar fascination for him, and he speedily transferred it to his person. He carried it to a town not far from the village, where he very readily found a purchaser.

As if purposely to secure his punishment, it happened that the storekeeper to whom he sold it proved to be a relative of one of the court servants, and who, when he visited his friend on the next holiday, related all about his purchase of the clock.

An investigation was immediately instituted, and all the details of Polikey's transaction were brought to light and reported to his noble mistress. He was called into her presence, and, when confronted with the story of the theft, broke down and confessed all. He fell on his knees before the noblewoman and plead with her for mercy. The kind-hearted lady lectured him about God, the salvation of his soul, and his future life. She talked to him also about the misery and disgrace he brought upon his family, and altogether so worked upon his feelings that he cried like a child. In conclusion his kind mistress said: 'I will forgive you this time on the condition that you promise faithfully to reform, and never again to take what does not belong to you."

Polikey, still weeping, replied: "I will never steal again in all my life, and if I break my promise may the earth open and swallow me up, and let my body be burned with red-hot irons!"

Polikey returned to his home, and throwing himself on the oven spent the entire day weeping and repeating the promise made to his mistress.

From that time on he was not again caught stealing, but his life became extremely sad, for he was regarded with suspicion by every one and pointed to as a thief.

When the time came around for securing recruits for the army, all the peasants singled out Polikey as the first to be taken. The superintendent was especially anxious to get rid of him, and went to his mistress to induce her to have him sent away. The kind-hearted and merciful woman, remembering the peasant's repentance, refused to grant the superintendent's request, and told him he must take some other man in his stead.

CHAPTER II.

One evening Polikey was sitting on his bed beside the table, preparing some medicine for the cattle, when suddenly the door was thrown wide open, and Aksiutka, a young girl from the court, rushed in. Almost out of breath, she said: "My mistress has ordered you, Polikey *Illitch* [son of Ilia], to come up to the court at once!"

The girl was standing and still breathing heavily from her late exertion as she continued: "Egor Mikhailovitch, the superintendent, has been to see our lady about having you drafted into the army, and, Polikey Illitch, your name was mentioned among others. Our lady has sent me to tell you to come up to the court immediately."

As soon as Aksiutka had delivered her mes-

sage she left the room in the same abrupt manner in which she had entered.

Akulina, without saying a word, got up and brought her husband's boots to him. They were poor, worn-out things which some soldier had given him, and his wife did not glance at him as she handed them to him.

"Are you going to change your shirt, Illitch?" she asked, at last.

"No," replied Polikey.

Akulina did not once look at him all the time he was putting on his boots and preparing to go to the court. Perhaps, after all, it was better that she did not do so. His face was very pale and his lips trembled. He slowly combed his hair and was about to depart without saying a word, when his wife stopped him to arrange the ribbon on his shirt, and, after toying a little with his coat, she put his hat on for him and he left the little home.

Polikey's next-door neighbors were a joiner and his wife. A thin partition only separated

the two families, and each could hear what the other said and did. Soon after Polikey's departure a woman was heard to say: "Well, Polikey Illitch, so your mistress has sent for you!"

The voice was that of the joiner's wife on the other side of the partition. Akulina and the woman had quarrelled that morning about some trifling thing done by one of Polikey's children, and it afforded her the greatest pleasure to learn that her neighbor had been summoned into the presence of his noble mistress. She looked upon such a circumstance as a bad omen. She continued talking to herself and said: "Perhaps she wants to send him to the town to make some purchases for her household. I did not suppose she would select such a faithful man as you are to perform such a service for her. If it should prove that she *does* want to send you to the next town, just buy me a quarter-pound of tea. Will you, Polikey Illitch?"

Poor Akulina, on hearing the joiner's wife

talking so unkindly of her husband, could hardly suppress the tears, and, the tirade continuing, she at last became angry, and wished she could in some way punish her.

Forgetting her neighbor's unkindness, her thoughts soon turned in another direction, and glancing at her sleeping children she said to herself that they might soon be orphans and she herself a soldier's widow. This thought greatly distressed her, and burying her face in her hands she seated herself on the bed, where several of her progeny were fast asleep. Presently a little voice interrupted her meditations by crying out, "*Mamushka* [little mother], you are crushing me," and the child pulled her night-dress from under her mother's arms.

Akulina, with her head still resting on her hands, said: "Perhaps it would be better if we all should die. I only seem to have brought you into the world to suffer sorrow and misery."

Unable longer to control her grief, she burst

into violent weeping, which served to increase the amusement of the joiner's wife, who had not forgotten the morning's squabble, and she laughed loudly at her neighbor's woe.

CHAPTER III.

About half an hour had passed when the youngest child began to cry and Akulina arose to feed it. She had by this time ceased to weep, and after feeding the infant she again fell into her old position, with her face buried in her hands. She was very pale, but this only increased her beauty. After a time she raised her head, and staring at the burning candle she began to question herself as to why she had married, and as to the reason that the Czar required so many soldiers.

Presently she heard steps outside, and knew that her husband was returning. She hurriedly wiped away the last traces of her tears as she arose to let him pass into the centre of the room.

Polikey made his appearance with a look of

triumph on his face, threw his hat on the bed, and hastily removed his coat; but not a word did he utter.

Akulina, unable to restrain her impatience, asked, "Well, what did she want with you?"

"Pshaw!" he replied, "it is very well known that Polikushka is considered the worst man in the village; but when it comes to business of importance, who is selected then? Why, Polikushka, of course."

"What kind of business?" Akulina timidly inquired.

But Polikey was in no hurry to answer her question. He lighted his pipe with a very imposing air, and spit several times on the floor before he replied.

Still retaining his pompous manner, he said, "She has ordered me to go to a certain merchant in the town and collect a considerable sum of money."

"You to collect money?" questioned Akulina.

Polikey only shook his head and smiled significantly, saying:

"'You,' the mistress said to me, 'are a man resting under a grave suspicion—a man who is considered unsafe to trust in any capacity; but I have faith in you, and will intrust you with this important business of mine in preference to any one else.'"

Polikey related all this in a loud voice, so that his neighbor might hear what he had to say.

"'You promised me to reform,' my noble mistress said to me, 'and I will be the first to show you how much faith I have in your promise. I want you to ride into town, and, going to the principal merchant there, collect a sum of money from him and bring it to me.' I said to my mistress: 'Everything you order shall be done. I will only too gladly obey your slightest wish.' Then my mistress said: 'Do you understand, Polikey, that your future lot depends upon the faithful performance of this

duty I impose upon you?' I replied: 'Yes, I understand everything, and feel that I will succeed in performing acceptably any task which you may impose upon me. I have been accused of every kind of evil deed that it is possible to charge a man with, but I have never done anything seriously wrong against you, your honor.' In this way I talked to our mistress until I succeeded in convincing her that my repentance was sincere, and she became greatly softened toward me, saying, 'If you are successful I will give you the first place at the court.'"

"And how much money are you to collect?" inquired Akulina.

"Fifteen hundred rubles," carelessly answered Polikey.

Akulina sadly shook her head as she asked, "When are you to start?"

"She ordered me to leave here to-morrow," Polikey replied. 'Take any horse you please,' she said. 'Come to the office, and I will see you there and wish you God-speed on your journey.'"

"Glory to Thee, O Lord!" said Akulina, as she arose and made the sign of the cross. "God, I am sure, will bless you, Illitch," she added, in a whisper, so that the people on the other side of the partition could not hear what she said, all the while holding on to his sleeve. "Illitch," she cried at last, excitedly, "for God's sake promise me that you will not touch a drop of vodki. Take an oath before God, and kiss the cross, so that I may be sure that you will not break your promise!"

Polikey replied in most contemptuous tones: "Do you think I will dare to touch vodki when I shall have such a large sum of money in my care?"

"Akulina, have a clean shirt ready for the morning," were his parting words for the night.

So Polikey and his wife went to sleep in a happy frame of mind and full of bright dreams for the future.

CHAPTER IV.

VERY early the next morning, almost before the stars had hidden themselves from view, there was seen standing before Polikey's home a low wagon, the same in which the superintendent himself used to ride; and harnessed to it was a large-boned, dark-brown mare, called for some unknown reason by the name of *Baraban* (drum). Aniutka, Polikey's eldest daughter, in spite of the heavy rain and the cold wind which was blowing, stood outside barefooted and held (not without some fear) the reins in one hand, while with the other she endeavored to keep her green and yellow overcoat wound around her body, and also to hold Polikey's sheepskin coat.

In the house there were the greatest noise and confusion. The morning was still so dark that

the little daylight there was failed to penetrate through the broken panes of glass, the window being stuffed in many places with rags and paper to exclude the cold air.

Akulina ceased from her cooking for a while and helped to get Polikey ready for the journey. Most of the children were still in bed, very likely as a protection against the cold, for Akulina had taken away the big overcoat which usually covered them and had substituted a shawl of her own. Polikey's shirt was all ready, nice and clean, but his shoes badly needed repairing, and this fact caused his devoted wife much anxiety. She took from her own feet the thick woollen stockings she was wearing, and gave them to Polikey. She then began to repair his shoes, patching up the holes so as to protect his feet from dampness.

While this was going on he was sitting on the side of the bed with his feet dangling over the edge, and trying to turn the sash which confined his coat at the waist. He was anxious to

look as clean as possible, and he declared his sash looked like a dirty rope.

One of his daughters, enveloped in a sheepskin coat, was sent to a neighbor's house to borrow a hat.

Within Polikey's home the greatest confusion reigned, for the court servants were constantly arriving with innumerable small orders which they wished Polikey to execute for them in town. One wanted needles, another tea, another tobacco, and last came the joiner's wife, who by this time had prepared her samovar, and, anxious to make up the quarrel of the previous day, brought the traveller a cup of tea.

Neighbor Nikita refused the loan of the hat, so the old one had to be patched up for the occasion. This occupied some time, as there were many holes in it.

Finally Polikey was all ready, and jumping on the wagon started on his journey, after first making the sign of the cross.

At the last moment his little boy, Mishka,

ran to the door, begging to be given a short ride; and then his little daughter, Mashka, appeared on the scene and pleaded that she, too, might have a ride, declaring that she would be quite warm enough without furs.

Polikey stopped the horse on hearing the children, and Akulina placed them in the wagon, together with two others belonging to a neighbor—all anxious to have a short ride.

As Akulina helped the little ones into the wagon she took occasion to remind Polikey of the solemn promise he had made her not to touch a drop of vodki during the journey.

Polikey drove the children as far as the blacksmith's place, where he let them out of the wagon, telling them they must return home. He then arranged his clothing, and, setting his hat firmly on his head, started his horse on a trot.

The two children, Mishka and Mashka, both barefooted, started running at such a rapid pace that a strange dog from another village,

seeing them flying over the road, dropped his tail between his legs and ran home squealing.

The weather was very cold, a sharp cutting wind blowing continuously; but this did not disturb Polikey, whose mind was engrossed with pleasant thoughts. As he rode through the wintry blasts he kept repeating to himself: "So I am the man they wanted to send to Siberia, and whom they threatened to enroll as a soldier—the same man whom every one abused, and said he was lazy, and who was pointed out as a thief and given the meanest work on the estate to do! Now I am going to receive a large sum of money, for which my mistress is sending me because she trusts me. I am also riding in the same wagon that the superintendent himself uses when he is riding as a representative of the court. I have the same harness, leather horse-collar, reins, and all the other gear."

Polikey, filled with pride at thought of the mission with which he had been intrusted, drew

himself up with an air of pride, and, fixing his old hat more firmly on his head, buttoned his coat tightly about him and urged his horse to greater speed.

"Just to think," he continued; "I shall have in my possession three thousand half-rubles [the peasant manner of speaking of money so as to make it appear a larger sum than it really is], and will carry them in my bosom. If I wished to I might run away to Odessa instead of taking the money to my mistress. But no; I will not do that. I will surely carry the money straight to the one who has been kind enough to trust me."

When Polikey reached the first *kabak* (tavern) he found that from long habit the mare was naturally turning her head toward it; but he would not allow her to stop, though money had been given him to purchase both food and drink. Striking the animal a sharp blow with the whip, he passed by the tavern. The performance was repeated when he reached the next kabak, which looked very inviting; but he

resolutely set his face against entering, and passed on.

About noon he arrived at his destination, and getting down from the wagon approached the gate of the merchant's house where the servants of the court always stopped. Opening it he led the mare through, and (after unharnessing her) fed her. This done, he next entered the house and had dinner with the merchant's workingmen, and to them he related what an important mission he had been sent on, making himself very amusing by the pompous air which he assumed. Dinner over, he carried a letter to the merchant which the noblewoman had given him to deliver.

The merchant, knowing thoroughly the reputation which Polikey bore, felt doubtful of trusting him with so much money, and somewhat anxiously inquired if he really had received orders to carry so many rubles.

Polikey tried to appear offended at this question, but did not succeed, and he only smiled.

The merchant, after reading the letter a second time and being convinced that all was right, gave Polikey the money, which he put in his bosom for safe-keeping.

On his way to the house he did not once stop at any of the shops he passed. The clothing establishments possessed no attractions for him, and after he had safely passed them all he stood for a moment, feeling very pleased that he had been able to withstand temptation, and then went on his way.

"I have money enough to buy up everything," he said; "but I will not do so."

The numerous commissions which he had received compelled him to go to the bazaar. There he bought only what had been ordered, but he could not resist the temptation to ask the price of a very handsome sheep-skin coat which attracted his attention. The merchant to whom he spoke looked at Polikey and smiled, not believing that he had sufficient money to purchase such an expensive coat. But Polikey, pointing

to his breast, said that he could buy out the whole shop if he wished to. He thereupon ordered the shop-keeper to take his measure. He tried the coat on and looked himself over carefully, testing the quality and blowing upon the hair to see that none of it came out. Finally, heaving a deep sigh, he took it off.

"The price is too high," he said. "If you could let me have it for fifteen rubles—"

But the merchant cut him short by snatching the coat from him and throwing it angrily to one side.

Polikey left the bazaar and returned to the merchant's house in high spirits.

After supper he went out and fed the mare, and prepared everything for the night. Returning to the house he got up on the stove to rest, and while there he took out the envelope which contained the money and looked long and earnestly at it. He could not read, but asked one of those present to tell him what the writing on the envelope meant. It was simply

the address and the announcement that it contained fifteen hundred rubles.

The envelope was made of common paper and was sealed with dark-brown sealing wax. There was one large seal in the centre and four smaller ones at the corners. Polikey continued to examine it carefully, even inserting his finger till he touched the crisp notes. He appeared to take a childish delight in having so much money in his possession.

Having finished his examination, he put the envelope inside the lining of his old battered hat, and placing both under his head he went to sleep; but during the night he frequently awoke and always felt to know if the money was safe. Each time that he found that it was safe he rejoiced at the thought that he, Polikey, abused and regarded by every one as a thief, was intrusted with the care of such a large sum of money, and also that he was about to return with it quite as safely as the superintendent himself could have done.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE dawn the next morning Polikey was up, and after harnessing the mare and looking in his hat to see that the money was all right, he started on his return journey.

Many times on the way Polikey took off his hat to see that the money was safe. Once he said to himself, "I think that perhaps it would be better if I should put it in my bosom." This would necessitate the untying of his sash, so he decided to keep it still in his hat, or until he should have made half the journey, when he would be compelled to stop to feed his horse and to rest.

He said to himself: "The lining is not sewn in very strongly and the envelope might fall out, so I think I had better not take off my hat until I reach home."

The money was safe—at least, so it seemed to him—and he began to think how grateful his mistress would be to him, and in his excited imagination he saw the five rubles he was so sure of receiving.

Once more he examined the hat to see that the money was safe, and finding everything all right he put on his hat and pulled it well down over his ears, smiling all the while at his own thoughts.

Akulina had carefully sewed all the holes in the hat, but it burst out in other places owing to Polikey's removing it so often.

In the darkness he did not notice the new rents, and tried to push the envelope further under the lining, and in doing so pushed one corner of it through the plush.

The sun was getting high in the heavens, and Polikey having slept but little the previous night and feeling its warm rays fell fast asleep, after first pressing his hat more firmly on his head. By this action he forced the envelope

still further through the plush, and as he rode along his head bobbed up and down.

Polikey did not awake till he arrived near his own house, and his first act was to put his hand to his head to learn if his hat was all right. Finding that it was in its place, he did not think it necessary to examine it and see that the money was safe. Touching the mare gently with the whip she started into a trot, and as he rode along he arranged in his own mind how much he was to receive. With the air of a man already holding a high position at the court, he looked around him with an expression of lofty scorn on his face.

As he neared his house he could see before him the one room which constituted their humble home, and the joiner's wife next door carrying her rolls of linen. He saw also the office of the court and his mistress's house, where he hoped he would be able presently to prove that he was an honest, trustworthy man.

He reasoned with himself that any person

can be abused by lying tongues, but when his mistress would see him she would say: "Well done, Polikey; you have shown that you can be honest. Here are three—it may be five—perhaps ten—rubles for you;" and also she would order tea for him, and might treat him to vodki —who knows? The latter thought gave him great pleasure, as he was feeling very cold.

Speaking aloud he said: "What a happy holy-day we can have with ten rubles! Having so much money, I could pay Nikita the four rubles fifty kopecks which I owe him, and yet have some left to buy shoes for the children."

When near the house Polikey began to arrange his clothes, smoothing down his fur collar, re-tying his sash, and stroking his hair. To do the latter he had to take off his hat, and when doing so felt in the lining for the envelope. Quicker and quicker he ran his hand around the lining, and not finding the money used both hands, first one and then the other. But the envelope was not to be found.

Polikey was by this time greatly distressed, and his face was white with fear as he passed his hand through the crown of his old hat. Polikey stopped the mare and began a diligent search through the wagon and its contents. Not finding the precious envelope, he felt in all his pockets—*but the money could not be found!*

Wildly clutching at his hair, he exclaimed: "*Batiushka!* What will I do now? What will become of me?" At the same time he realized that he was near his neighbors' house and could be seen by them; so he turned the mare around, and, pulling his hat down securely upon his head, he rode quickly back in search of his lost treasure.

CHAPTER VI.

THE whole day passed without any one in the village of Pokrovski having seen anything of Polikey. During the afternoon his mistress inquired many times as to his whereabouts, and sent Aksiutka frequently to Akulina, who each time sent back word that Polikey had not yet returned, saying also that perhaps the merchant had kept him, or that something had happened the mare.

His poor wife felt a heavy load upon her heart, and was scarcely able to do her housework and put everything in order for the next day (which was to be a holy-day). The children also anxiously awaited their father's appearance, and, though for different reasons, could hardly restrain their impatience. The noblewoman and Akulina were concerned only

in regard to Polikey himself, while the children were interested most in what he would bring them from the town.

The only news received by the villagers during the day concerning Polikey was to the effect that neighboring peasants had seen him running up and down the road and asking every one he met if he or she had found an envelope.

One of them had seen him also walking by the side of his tired-out horse. "I thought," said he, "that the man was drunk, and had not fed his horse for two days — the animal looked so exhausted."

Unable to sleep, and with her heart palpitating at every sound, Akulina lay awake all night vainly awaiting Polikey's return. When the cock crowed the third time she was obliged to get up to attend to the fire. Day was just dawning and the church-bells had begun to ring. Soon all the children were also up, but there was still no tidings of the missing husband and father.

In the morning the chill blasts of winter entered their humble home, and on looking out they saw that the houses, fields, and roads were thickly covered with snow. The day was clear and cold, as if befitting the holy-day they were about to celebrate. They were able to see a long distance from the house, but no one was in sight.

Akulina was busy baking cakes, and had it not been for the joyous shouts of the children she would not have known that Polikey was coming up the road, for a few minutes later he came in with a bundle in his hand and walked quietly to his corner. Akulina noticed that he was very pale and that his face bore an expression of suffering—as if he would like to have cried but could not do so. But she did not stop to study it, but excitedly inquired: "What! Illitch, is everything all right with you?"

He slowly muttered something, but his wife could not understand what he said.

"What!" she cried out, "have you been to see our mistress?"

Polikey still sat on the bed in his corner, glaring wildly about him, and smiling bitterly. He did not reply for a long time, and Akulina again cried:

"Eh? Illitch! Why don't you answer me? Why don't you speak?"

Finally he said: "Akulina, I delivered the money to our mistress; and oh, how she thanked me!" Then he suddenly looked about him, with an anxious, startled air, and with a sad smile on his lips. Two things in the room seemed to engross the most of his attention: the baby in the cradle, and the rope which was attached to the ladder. Approaching the cradle, he began with his thin fingers quickly to untie the knot in the rope by which the two were connected. After untying it he stood for a few moments looking silently at the baby.

Akulina did not notice this proceeding, and

with her cakes on the board went to place them in a corner.

Polikey quickly hid the rope beneath his coat, and again seated himself on the bed.

"What is it that troubles you, Illitch?" inquired Akulina. "You are not yourself."

"I have not slept," he answered.

Suddenly a dark shadow crossed the window, and a minute later the girl Aksiutka quickly entered the room, exclaiming:

"The *boyarinia* commands you, Polikey Illitch, to come to her this moment!"

Polikey looked first at Akulina and then at the girl.

"This moment!" he cried. "What more is wanted?"

He spoke the last sentence so softly that Akulina became quieted in her mind, thinking that perhaps their mistress intended to reward her husband.

"Say that I will come immediately," he said.

But Polikey failed to follow the girl, and went instead to another place.

From the porch of his house there was a ladder reaching to the attic. Arriving at the foot of the ladder Polikey looked around him, and seeing no one about, he quickly ascended to the garret.

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Meanwhile the girl had reached her mistress's house.

"What does it mean that Polikey does not come?" said the noblewoman impatiently. "Where can he be? Why does he not come at once?"

Aksiutka flew again to his house and demanded to see Polikey.

"He went a long time ago," answered Akulina, and looking around with an expression of fear on her face, she added, "He may have fallen asleep somewhere on the way."

About this time the joiner's wife, with hair unkempt and clothes bedraggled, went up to

the loft to gather the linen which she had previously put there to dry. Suddenly a cry of horror was heard, and the woman, with her eyes closed, and crazed by fear, ran down the ladder like a cat.

"Illitch," she cried, "has hanged himself!"

Poor Akulina ran up the ladder before any of the people, who had gathered from the surrounding houses, could prevent her. With a loud shriek she fell back as if dead, and would surely have been killed had not one of the spectators succeeded in catching her in his arms.

Before dark the same day a peasant of the village, while returning from the town, found the envelope containing Polikey's money on the roadside, and soon after delivered it to the *boyarinia.*

THE END.

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